



Calderdale and Huddersfield

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information Leaflet

Anaemia - Patient Information Leaflet – Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC)

What is anaemia?

Anaemia is a condition where you do not have enough healthy red blood cells or haemoglobin in your blood.

Haemoglobin is the part of red blood cells that carries oxygen around your body.

If you have anaemia, your organs and tissues may not get enough oxygen.

What causes anaemia?

There are several possible causes, including:

1. Iron deficiency (most common)

- Not enough iron in the diet
- Blood loss (e.g. heavy periods, stomach or bowel bleeding)

2. Vitamin deficiency

- Low vitamin B12 or folate levels

3. Chronic illness

- Long-term conditions such as kidney disease or inflammatory conditions

4. Blood loss

- Recent surgery or injury
- Internal bleeding

5. Other causes

- Bone marrow problems (less common)
- Malignancies

Symptoms of anaemia

You may experience:

- Tiredness or fatigue
- Shortness of breath, especially on exertion
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Palpitations (feeling your heart racing)
- Pale skin
- Headaches
- Reduced exercise tolerance

Some people may have mild or no symptoms.

How is anaemia diagnosed?

Anaemia is diagnosed using blood tests, including:

- Full blood count (FBC)
- Iron studies (ferritin, iron levels)
- Vitamin B12 and folate levels
- Kidney function tests

Further tests may be needed to find the cause of blood loss.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the cause and severity of your anaemia.

You may be offered:

Iron deficiency

- Iron tablets (or liquid iron)
- Occasionally intravenous (IV) iron in hospital
- Advice on iron-rich foods

Vitamin deficiency

- Vitamin B12 injections or tablets
- Folic acid tablets

Severe anaemia

- Blood transfusion (if required and appropriate)

Treating the cause

- Investigations for bleeding (e.g. bowel or stomach tests)
- Treatment of underlying conditions

Iron-rich foods

Good sources of iron include:

- Red meat
- Liver (avoid in pregnancy)
- Beans and lentils
- Dark green vegetables (e.g. spinach)
- Fortified cereals

Vitamin C (e.g. orange juice) helps the body absorb iron.

Iron tablets – important advice

If prescribed iron tablets:

- Take them regularly as prescribed
- They may cause dark stools (this is normal)
- They may cause constipation or stomach upset
- Taking them with vitamin C can improve absorption
- Avoid taking with tea, coffee, or milk at the same time

What you can do to help

- Take medication as prescribed
- Eat a balanced diet rich in iron and vitamins
- Attend follow-up blood tests
- Report any signs of bleeding (e.g. black stools or heavy periods)

When to seek urgent help

Seek urgent medical attention if you experience:

- Chest pain or severe breathlessness
- Fainting or collapse
- Rapid worsening of symptoms
- Black, tarry stools or vomiting blood
- Severe weakness or inability to cope at home

In an emergency, call 999.

When to seek medical advice

Contact your GP or NHS 111 if:

- Symptoms are not improving
- You cannot tolerate iron tablets
- You have ongoing fatigue or worsening symptoms
- You notice signs of possible blood loss

Follow-up care

You may need:

- Repeat blood tests to check improvement
- Investigation to find the cause of anaemia
- GP or specialist follow-up
- Long-term monitoring in some cases

Important information

Anaemia is common and usually treatable once the cause is identified. Improvement may take several weeks after starting treatment.

Key message

Anaemia means your blood has fewer oxygen-carrying cells than normal. With the right treatment and follow-up, most people improve significantly.

Contact information

If you have concerns after leaving SDEC, please contact:

SDEC / Hospital Advice Line: _____

GP: _____

Out of hours: NHS 111

In an emergency, call 999.