



Anemia: When your red blood cells are very low

Red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of your body. Anemia is usually a temporary condition caused by chemotherapy, and/or radiation treatments. Other causes might be blood loss, tumor spread into the bone marrow, anemia of chronic disease, and hemolytic anemias. Your red blood cell count may fall slowly during treatment. When your hemoglobin and hematocrit fall below a certain range, you are anemic. This may cause you to feel very tired physically and emotionally. Other symptoms of anemia are extreme weakness, headache, paleness, and sleep problems.

Call your doctor right away for:

- ✓ *Trouble breathing*
- ✓ *Fast heartbeat*
- ✓ *Chest pain*
- ✓ *Dizziness*
- ✓ *Loss of concentration or confusion*

Things to do:

- Decide what activities are important to you. Save your energy for those tasks.
- Balance activity and rest.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep more at night. Take a nap once a day.
- Exercise every day, such as walking.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- Try to eat. Use ready-to-eat foods. Freeze extra portions to eat later.
- Sit up slowly. Stand up slowly.
- Say yes to friends and family who want to help with tasks such as shopping, housework, childcare, or cooking.
- Tell ALL your doctors that you may have low red blood cells.

✓ For more suggestions about Fatigue, see Inova Cancer Services “Managing Fatigue During the Cancer Experience” pamphlet.

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