

# ANEMIA DURING PREGNANCY

Reviewed by: Iroque Igbinosa, MD, April, 2023

Your body needs healthy red blood cells to produce energy. As your red blood cells move, they transport oxygen not only to your organs but when you are pregnant, to your developing baby, too.

When your **blood cell count is low**, you have **anemia**. The **most common type of anemia specific to pregnancy is called iron-deficiency anemia (IDA)**.

If untreated, IDA can lead to low birth-weight, preterm birth, developmental problems, blood transfusion after delivery, or postpartum hemorrhage (PPH). BIPOC pregnant people and those expecting twins are more likely to experience IDA.

## ANEMIA SYMPTOMS

- Tiredness and weakness out of ordinary, even in pregnant state
- Experiencing PICA which means you crave non-food items, for example ice
- Your hands or feet feel cold
- You feel that you can't catch a breath
- Dizziness, lightheadedness

If you notice any of these signs, talk to your provider. Even if it requires scheduling an extra appointment. Following up with appointments and blood tests can help establish early diagnosis, find the right treatment, and prevent birth complications.

## TREATMENTS FOR IRON-DEFICIENCY ANEMIA

During pregnancy your blood volume naturally increases, and your body needs more red blood cells. If your red blood count results show too low numbers, your provider may recommend one or more treatment **options to increase your iron in addition to the recommended daily intake of 27 milligrams (mg)**.

- **Iron rich diet** Certain types of food have high iron content. These include poultry, dried fruits, beans, eggs, iron-fortified cereal, bread, & pasta, meat, spinach and other dark leafy greens. Find some WIC iron-rich recipes: [wicworks.fns.usda.gov/resources/wic-meals-month-pumping-iron](http://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/resources/wic-meals-month-pumping-iron)
- **Iron pills and prenatal vitamins that have iron.** Take prenatal vitamins that include iron regularly. In addition to the prenatal vitamins, your provider might prescribe daily iron pills to increase your iron intake
- **Intravenous (IV) iron transfusion** is a method when a provider gives iron injections through the veins. The process takes several hours.



**IRON RICH DIET  
- BEANS,  
GREENS, MEAT**



**TAKING IRON-  
PILLS &  
PRENATAL  
VITAMINS**



**IV IRON  
TRANSFUSION**

## TIPS TO INCREASE IRON ABSORPTION

- Try eating **oranges, tomatoes, strawberries or other fruits** with high vitamin C content to help your body absorb iron. This will also help with constipation, which can be more frequent when taking iron pills.
- Try **avoiding dairy products** like milk, egg yolks, fiber and soybeans in the same meal. Eating together calcium-rich food and iron-rich food can **block** iron absorption.

## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF IS THE FIRST STEP OF CARING FOR YOUR BABY

- It is okay to have questions about your health. **Ask for more information from your provider**
- **Getting a pill organizer can help you remember** to take your prenatal supplements regularly
- Tell your provider if anemia is known in your **family medical history**
- You are not alone! **Seek support** from people around you
- If you experience side effects with your treatment, **ask your provider about switching to other options**