

Anemia/Low Blood Count *Information for Patients*

What is anemia?

- If your blood count is low in red blood cells, you may have anemia.
- Red blood cells contain hemoglobin (Hgb) which carries oxygen throughout the body.
- A low hemoglobin (Hgb) is a common problem for people with chronic kidney disease (CKD).
- Anemia is usually caused by low levels of the hormone erythropoietin (EPO) being released by the kidney. This hormone helps make red blood cells.
- Normal range for hemoglobin (Hgb) is approximately 120-160 g/l for females & 130-180 g/l for males.

What are the symptoms of anemia?

- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Headache
- Shortness of breath
- Low energy
- Feeling cold
- Decreased sexual drive
- Difficulty concentrating

While these symptoms are common to most people with anemia, you may respond differently. Listen to your body & be aware of any changes.

If your hemoglobin (Hgb) becomes very low, you may experience a racing heart rate & chest pain. These symptoms should be assessed by a doctor right away.

What can I do?

1. Take iron supplements or Eprex/Aranesp injections if prescribed. Do **NOT** take iron pills at the same time as your calcium pills.
2. Pace yourself, stop when you feel tired.
3. If it is decided that you would benefit from treatment that requires needles for your anemia, you will need to have regular blood tests.

(This sheet contains general information, & your symptoms & treatment may vary according to your circumstance. If you have any specific questions, please contact your nurse, pharmacist, or doctor.)

