



Anemia



Overview

This condition is a problem with your blood. If you have anemia, you don't have enough healthy red blood cells. These are the cells that carry oxygen through your bloodstream. Without enough red blood cells, your body's cells don't receive enough oxygen.

Causes

Anemia has a variety of causes. It can develop because of blood loss. This can be a problem for women during menstruation or childbirth. It can also be a problem for people who have gastrointestinal conditions such as ulcers or hemorrhoids. Anemia can develop because your body can't produce enough healthy red blood cells. This happens when a disease or condition affects the blood cells or bone marrow. It can also be a problem for people with an imbalance of vitamins or minerals in their bodies. And finally, anemia can be caused by the destruction of red blood cells. This can come from infections or exposure to toxins. It can also result from severe burns, medications or certain foods.

Risk Factors

You are at higher risk for anemia if you have a genetic predisposition. You have a higher risk if you have a poor diet. You have an increased risk if you have an intestinal disorder such as Crohn's disease or celiac disease, or if you have a disease such as cancer. Women are at a higher risk during menstruation and pregnancy. Children who are going through growth spurts also have an increased risk.

Symptoms

Fatigue is the most common symptom of anemia. Other symptoms may include pale skin or cold hands and feet. You may have an increased heart rate or shortness of breath. You may experience chest pain, dizziness, or headache.

Treatment

Treatment depends on how bad your anemia is and its cause. You may benefit from nutritional supplements or medications. You may benefit from transfusions of bone marrow or blood. If your anemia is from blood loss, you may need treatment for the underlying cause. Your healthcare provider can help identify the cause of your anemia and recommend a treatment plan that is right for your needs.