

About Anemia

Nourish Spotlight

ANEMIA

Anemia means you do not have enough healthy red blood cells in your body. Your hemoglobin levels will also be low. Hemoglobin is a protein in your red blood cells that carries oxygen to all cells and tissues. Without enough oxygen your cells and tissues can't work properly.

If a blood test shows that your hemoglobin levels are lower than normal, cancer and its treatment can be one reason. It can slow down or decrease red blood cell production. A pre-existing condition, blood loss, or difficulty with eating can be other possible reasons. Difficulty eating can lead to a decrease in vitamins and minerals needed for red blood cell development, including iron, B₁₂ and folate.

There are different types of anemia. Talk to your doctor and healthcare team if you have been diagnosed with anemia to find the right treatment for you.

SYMPTOMS OF ANEMIA

Fatigue, weakness	Pale complexion	Shortness of breath
Fast heartbeat	Dizziness or lightheadedness	Loss of appetite

Nutrition can help with red blood cell development

Your healthcare team may suggest various treatments to manage anemia, including supplements because it can be hard to improve your blood counts (red blood cells, hemoglobin) with diet alone. But it is important to include the essential blood building nutrients in your diet to help support blood cell development, keep you strong, prevent further deficiencies, and improve your overall nutrition status.

SOME ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS FOR BLOOD CELL DEVELOPMENT

IRON

B₁₂

FOLATE

COMMON FOOD SOURCES

HEME

Red meats

Poultry

Fish and seafood

Eggs

NON-HEME

Legumes (beans and lentils)

Whole grains

Dark green leafy vegetables

Fortified breakfast cereals

Nuts and seeds

Red meats

Fish

Eggs

Dairy products

Poultry

Nutritional yeast

Dark green leafy vegetables

Legumes

Eggs

Sunflower seeds

Fortified foods, such as cereal

How to find essential nutrients on food labels

Food labels on packaged foods can help you find nutrient-rich products. Protein and iron, for example, are always listed.



DV

The Daily Value shows if the serving size has a little or a lot of a nutrient.

- 5% DV or less is a little
- 15% DV or more is a lot

Protein

An average healthy adult* needs 0.8 grams (g) per kilogram (kg) of body weight of protein per day. Example: if you weigh 75 kg, you should consume 60 g of protein per day.

Iron

Look for food items with more than 10% DV of iron. An average adult* needs between 8–18 milligrams of iron per day* (see card *Getting iron from food*).

* Talk to a Registered Dietitian about your nutrient requirements and what to look for on food labels. A meal plan might help you reach your goals (see card *Getting iron from plant sources*).

It gets more tricky when you are trying to find folate and B₁₂ on food labels because they do not have to be listed.

Dairy products, plant-based beverages, and cereals often list folate and B₁₂.

As an example, here is a label of a dairy product.

Nutrition Facts		Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL) / pour 1 tasse (250 mL)			
Calories 110			
Fat / Lipides 2.5 g		% Daily Value*	% valeur quotidienne*
Saturated / saturés 1.5 g			3 %
+ Trans / trans 0.1 g			8 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 13 g			
Fibre / Fibres 0 g			
Sugars / Sucres 13 g			0 %
Protein / Protéines 9 g			
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 10 mg			
Sodium 105 mg			
Potassium 350 mg			5 %
Calcium 300 mg			7 %
Iron / Fer 0.1 mg			23 %
Vitamin A / Vitamine A 150 µg			1 %
Vitamin D / Vitamine D 2.5 µg			17 %
Thiamine 0.1 mg			13 %
Riboflavin / Riboflavine 0.6 mg			8 %
Niacin / Niacine 1.3 mg			46 %
Folate 15 µg DFE / EFA			9 %
Vitamin B ₁₂ / Vitamine B ₁₂ 0.95 µg			4 %
Phosphorus / Phosphore 200 mg			38 %
Magnesium / Magnésium 25 mg			16 %
Zinc 1 mg			6 %
			9 %

Links

- 🔗 [Anemia during cancer treatment](#)
- 🔗 [Understanding food labels](#)

Recipe

- 🔗 [Tofu Stir Fry](#)

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DISCLAIMER

The information in this publication is not intended as medical advice nor should it replace advice, expertise and information given by a member of your healthcare team.

Nourish Spotlight is a publication of the *Nourish: Canada's Nutrition Companion for Oncology Patients and Caregivers* series: a free resource developed by registered dietitians, available in print and online www.nourishonline.ca

Made possible through an educational grant provided by

