

IRON OUT THE CAUSE OF YOUR ANAEMIA

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Anaemia (low blood count), can be due to reduced absorption of iron, vitamin B12 or folic acid from the digestive tract. It can also result from rapid or gradual blood loss from anywhere in the digestive tract.

Whatever the cause of anaemia, the effect on the individual is the same. When the onset is gradual, tiredness, reduced function, headaches, shortness of breath, or chest pain tend to be the

predominant symptoms. When onset is rapid, however, in addition to all of the above, it may also lead to dizziness and collapse.

Although anaemia may improve with iron supplements, or vitamins such as vitamin B12 and folic acid, the success of treatment is largely dependent on finding the underlying cause and targeting appropriate treatment.

Blood tests such as tissue transglutaminase may reveal coeliac disease as the underlying cause of poor absorption. Endoscopic inspection of the upper digestive system (gastroscopy) and lower bowel (colonoscopy) may reveal bleeding lesions such as ulcers, polyps, cancers or abnormally thin blood vessels (angiodyplasia).

In some situations, such tests alone may not reveal the underlying problem. An investigation of the small intestine with miniature cameras capable of transmitting wireless images (capsule endoscopy) or dedicated longer endoscopes designed to inspect the small bowel (balloon enteroscopy) may be required.

Although anaemia may be the result of poor diet, in the absence of heavy periods it always needs to be assessed by a clinician and a referral to a gastroenterologist made if the basis is thought to be digestive related.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Persistent tiredness? – Contact your doctor to exclude anaemia.

Anaemic and not having heavy periods? – Have a specialist check for coeliac disease.

Suspicion of poor absorption or digestive blood loss? – Seek referral to a gastroenterologist.

GET IN TOUCH...

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Treat anaemia and you may relieve your digestive complaints