

These medicines work best when given several weeks before surgery, so it is important to identify, evaluate and treat anemia as soon as possible when surgery is planned. Your doctor may also give other treatments based on what is causing your anemia.

Prepare for your anemia clinic visit:

- Take a list of all medications and supplements you take to your appointment.
- Make a list of any major stresses you are experiencing or recent life changes.
- Take a list of all symptoms you are experiencing.
- Take a list of all questions you have for the doctor.

Appointment Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Comments: _____



Anemia and Surgery



What is Anemia?

Anemia is a condition in which your body does not have enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen to your tissues. Red blood cells contain an iron rich protein called hemoglobin that carries oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. There are many reasons a person may be anemic, including iron deficiency; vitamin deficiency; bleeding, chronic inflammation; diseases of the bone marrow, which is the organ where blood is made; aging; and diseases that destroy the blood cells.

How common is anemia in surgery patients?

Studies have shown anemia is very common in patients who are planning to have elective surgery, depending on the type of problem for which they are having surgery for and their overall health. Following surgery, anemia is even more common, affecting 90 out of 100 patients, due to the bleeding associated with the surgery.

What are the effects of anemia in surgery patients?

Anemia may cause symptoms including:

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Pale skin
- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Irritability
- Numbness or coldness in your hands and feet
- Trouble breathing
- A fast heartbeat
- Headache
- Craving ice may be a sign of iron deficiency

Symptoms usually develop when anemia is moderate to severe and may vary based upon the cause of the anemia. Very severe anemia may cause organ damage and death. Patients who have anemia around the time of surgery have more complications from surgery including a higher risk of infection, a longer need for breathing assistance with a machine, and higher death rates than people who do not have anemia after surgery.

Severe anemia associated with surgery is often treated with blood transfusions, which may be life-saving, but are associated with complications from the transfusions. The chance of needing transfusions is increased in surgeries which cause a lot of blood loss. The chance of needing transfusion is also increased in patients who are anemic before undergoing the surgery.

Patients who have transfusions around the time of surgery have higher complication rates, hospital stays and death rates than those who do not require transfusion. Studies have shown that patients with anemia who require elective major surgery who have their anemia evaluated and treated before the surgery have a significantly lower chance of needing transfusions. By treating the anemia beforehand, we hope to improve your chances of a good outcome from surgery.

What treatments are available to help me?

Medicines that stimulate the production of red blood cells have been approved to treat pre-surgery anemia and have been shown to reduce transfusions in anemic patients whose surgery causes large amounts of blood loss.