

Iron Deficiency in Adults: Anemia (A Condition in Which Blood Lacks Adequate Healthy Red Blood Cells)

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Introduction

Iron deficiency anemia is the most common type of anemia, and it occurs when your body doesn't have enough of the mineral iron. Your body needs iron to make hemoglobin. When there isn't enough iron in your blood stream, the rest of your body can't get the amount of oxygen it needs. While the condition may be common, many people don't know they have iron deficiency anemia. It's possible to experience the symptoms for years without ever knowing the cause. In women of childbearing age, the most common cause of iron deficiency anemia is a loss of iron in the blood due to heavy menstruation or pregnancy. A poor diet or certain intestinal diseases that affect how the body absorbs iron can also cause iron deficiency anemia.

Symptoms of iron deficiency anemia

The symptoms of iron deficiency anemia can be mild at first, and you may not even notice them. According to the American Society of Hematology (ASH), most people don't realize they have mild anemia until they have a routine blood test. The symptoms of moderate to severe iron deficiency anemia include: general fatigue, weakness, pale skin, shortness of breath, dizziness, strange cravings to eat items that aren't food, such as dirt, ice, or clay, a tingling or crawling feeling in the legs, tongue swelling or soreness, cold hands and feet, fast or irregular heartbeat, brittle nails, headaches.

Iron deficiency anemia is a common type of anemia — a condition in which blood lacks adequate healthy red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen to the body's tissues. Iron deficiency anemia is due to insufficient iron. Without enough iron, your body can't produce enough of a substance in red blood cells that enables them to carry oxygen (hemoglobin). As a result, iron deficiency anemia may leave

you tired and short of breath. Iron deficiency, or sideropenia, is the state in which a body lacks enough iron to supply its needs. Iron is present in all cells in the human body and has several vital functions, such as carrying oxygen to the tissues from the lungs as a key component of the hemoglobin protein, acting as a transport medium for electrons within the cells in the form of cytochromes, and facilitating oxygen enzyme reactions in various tissues. Too little iron can interfere with these vital functions and lead to morbidity and death.

Conclusion

Iron is a mineral that is naturally present in many foods, added to some food products, and available as a dietary supplement. Iron is an essential component of hemoglobin, an erythrocyte (red blood cell) protein that transfers oxygen from the lungs to the tissues. As a component of myoglobin, another protein that provides oxygen, iron supports muscle metabolism and healthy connective tissue. Iron is also necessary for physical growth, neurological development, cellular functioning, and synthesis of some hormones. Dietary iron has two main forms: heme and nonheme. Plants and iron-fortified foods contain nonheme iron only, whereas meat, seafood, and poultry contain both heme and nonheme iron. Heme iron, which is formed when iron combines with protoporphyrin IX, contributes about 10% to 15% of total iron intakes in western populations.

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