

Nephrology Associates
Patient Education Sheet— Anemia

Anemia is a condition that happens when your blood is lacking healthy red blood cells. Red blood cells are the main transporter of oxygen to the body's organs. If red blood cells are also lacking in hemoglobin (red, iron-rich protein) then your body will not get enough iron or oxygen.

Anemia has many symptoms, which may include the following:

- ❖ Extreme fatigue
- ❖ Shortness of breath
- ❖ Constantly feeling cold
- ❖ Dizziness or lightheadedness
- ❖ Loss of concentration or confusion
- ❖ Pale skin
- ❖ Rapid or irregular heartbeat

The treatment of anemia is based on the type of anemia. Your doctor may prescribe nutritional supplements, changes in your diet, and/or medications. Epoetin alfa (Epogen or Procrit) or Darbepoetin alfa (Aranesp) are two types of medications to treat anemia. Erythropoetin is a hormone that is produced by the kidneys. Epogen and Aranesp are the manmade version of the hormone erythropoetin. Epogen travels to the bone marrow to signal the bone marrow to produce red blood cells. New blood cells are made in about 2-3 weeks. Epogen and Aranesp are given by injection. Aranesp is a longer acting version of epogen.

Iron is needed by your body to make red blood cells. Many people who take Aranesp or Epogen may need extra iron. Iron can be given as an IV injection or in (oral) pill form. The oral form of iron may not be enough to keep your new red cells healthy, so your doctor may order IV iron.

If you are anemic or iron deficient, your kidney doctor (nephrologist) will advise you if these medications are needed as part of your treatment.