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Hemolysis

Hemolysis is the breakdown of red blood cells.

Information

Red blood cells normally live for 110 to 120 days. After that, they naturally break down and are most often removed from the circulation by the spleen.

Some diseases and processes cause red blood cells to break down too soon. This requires the bone marrow to make more red blood cells than normal. The balance between red blood cell breakdown and production determines how low the red blood cell count becomes. If the red blood cell count becomes abnormally low, it is called hemolytic anemia.

Conditions that can cause hemolysis include:

- Immune reactions
- Infections
- Medicines
- Toxins and poisons
- Red blood cell metabolism or defects in the shape of blood cells

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