COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO ANAEMIA

Description

Anaemia is a condition in which the blood has a reduced ability to carry oxygen, typically due to a lower-than-normal number of red blood cells (RBCs) or a lack of the iron-rich protein called haemoglobin. Anaemia is not a single disease but a sign of an underlying health problem. Common types include:

- Iron-Deficiency Anaemia: The most common form, caused by a lack of iron, which the body needs to make haemoglobin.
- Vitamin-Deficiency Anaemia: Caused by low levels of Vitamin B12 or folate.
- Aplastic Anaemia: A rare, life-threatening condition where the bone marrow stops producing enough new blood cells.
- Haemolytic Anaemia: Occurs when red blood cells are destroyed faster than the bone marrow can replace them.

History

The history of asthma is as old as civilization itself, with its name and understanding evolving over millennia:

- Ancient Records (c. 2600 BC): The earliest descriptions of "noisy breathing" and respiratory distress were recorded in ancient China.
- Coined by Hippocrates (c. 450 BC): The term "asthma" is derived from the Greek word *azein*, meaning "to pant" or "sharp breath." Hippocrates was the first to recognize the link between asthma symptoms and environmental factors.
- Medieval Observations (12th Century): The philosopher Maimonides wrote a "Treatise on Asthma," suggesting that symptoms could be managed through diet, sleep, and personal hygiene.
- Modern Understanding (20th Century): In the early 1900s, researchers identified that asthma was an inflammatory disease. By the 1960s, the development of the "metered-dose inhaler" (MDI) revolutionized treatment, allowing patients to deliver medicine directly to their lungs.

How the Disease Spreads

Anaemia is **not a contagious disease**. You cannot catch it from another person. It is an internal condition caused by:

- Nutritional Deficiencies: Lack of iron, B12, or folate in the diet.

- Blood Loss: Often due to heavy menstruation, surgery, or internal bleeding (like ulcers).
- Genetics: Conditions like Sickle Cell Anaemia or Thalassemia are inherited from parents.
- Chronic Diseases: Kidney disease, cancer, and inflammatory conditions can interfere with red blood cell production.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms of anaemia are often subtle at first but worsen as the condition progresses.

- Persistent Fatigue: Feeling extremely tired or weak even after resting.
- Pallor: Unusually pale skin, gums, or the inside of the lower eyelids.
- Shortness of Breath: Getting winded easily during simple tasks like walking.
- Cold Extremities: Hands and feet that feel cold even in warm weather.
- Dizziness or Light-headedness: Often occurring when standing up quickly.
- Pica: An unusual craving for non-food items like ice, dirt, or paper (common in iron deficiency).

When to Visit a Doctor

You should schedule a medical appointment if you experience unexplained, persistent exhaustion.

- Low Haemoglobin: If you are told you cannot donate blood because of low haemoglobin levels.
- Chronic Bleeding: If you have very heavy periods or notice blood in your stool (which may appear black or tarry).
- Pica: If you find yourself compulsively eating ice or other non-food items.
- Emergency Signs: Seek immediate care for chest pain, a rapid or irregular heartbeat, or if you faint.

Preventative Measures

Many common forms of anaemia, especially those related to nutrition, can be prevented:

- Iron-Rich Diet: Eat animal proteins (beef, poultry, fish), beans, lentils, and iron-fortified cereals.
- Vitamin C for Absorption: Pair iron-rich foods with Vitamin C (like orange juice, peppers, or strawberries) to help your body absorb the iron better.
- Avoid Inhibitors: Do not drink tea or coffee with meals, as the tannins can block iron absorption.
- Folate and B12: Ensure adequate intake of leafy greens, fruits, and dairy or fortified plant milks.

- Prenatal Care: Pregnant women should follow their doctor's advice regarding iron and folic acid supplements, as their blood volume increases significantly