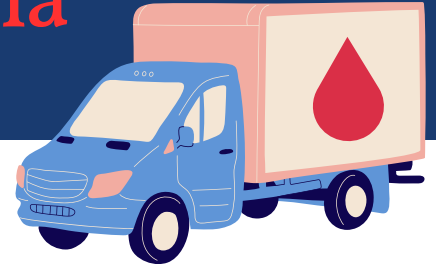


Delivery trucks and red blood cells:

Unpacking anaemia



What is anaemia?

Imagine your body as a bustling city, and your red blood cells are the delivery trucks carrying oxygen to every corner. When you have anaemia, it's like the trucks are not able to make all the deliveries, leaving the city tired and weak. This is how the body feels when it doesn't receive enough oxygen.

The most common causes of anaemia include not getting enough iron in your diet, poor absorption of iron or chronic blood loss (for example heavy menstrual periods). Plus, not having enough essential vitamins like B12 and B9 (known as folate) can also slow down red blood cell production.

How common is anaemia?

Anaemia is a global health issue, affecting millions of people worldwide, including right here in Malaysia. Globally, about 40% of children aged 6-59 months and 1 in 3 women of reproductive age are affected. For pregnant women, the numbers are even higher, around 37%. These stats highlight how significant anaemia is, especially among vulnerable groups like young children and women.



In Malaysia, the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019 found that about **1 in 4 adults** are affected by anaemia. Among **children aged 6-59 months**, the prevalence is **46.5%**, which is **significantly higher than the global average of 40%**, highlighting a pressing public health concern.



Maternal anaemia increases the risk of **low birth weight, preterm birth, and poor growth outcomes** in infants. Children with anaemia are more likely to experience stunting due to inadequate oxygen supply to their tissues, negatively affecting their overall growth and development. High rates of anaemia are likely contributing to the fact that **1 in 5 children** in Malaysia are stunted.

How do I know if I have anaemia?

Anaemia can sneak up on you with a variety of symptoms, ranging from mild to severe. Keep an eye out for:

- Feeling tired and weak
- Shortness of breath
- Pale or yellowish skin
- Irregular heartbeat
- Dizziness or feeling light-headed
- Cold hands and feet
- Headaches

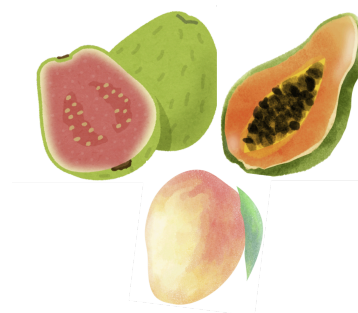


Spotting these symptoms early is key to getting diagnosed and treated in time, preventing more serious health problems. If you notice any of these signs, it's a good idea to see your doctor, as there are many different reasons why you may be experiencing anaemia and this should be investigated further.

How can I prevent anaemia?

Your diet plays a crucial role in preventing and managing anaemia. Here are some tips:

- **Eat foods rich in iron:** Include lean meats (chicken, beef), fish and seafood (especially cockles), leafy greens (spinach, kangkung, pucuk paku), bitter melon, chickpeas, nuts and seeds.



- **Boost with vitamin C:** Add fruits and veggies like guava, papaya, mango, peppers and cabbage to your meals to help your body absorb iron better.
- **Avoid iron blockers:** Try not to have tea/teh tarik, coffee/cham, or dairy products with your iron-rich meals, as they can make it harder for your body to absorb iron.

Simple changes to your diet can make a big difference!