

# Lets talk about anemia

A 2019 Oxford Academic review article reported that the prevalence of anemia in the adult population, considering all ages and 204 countries, was 22.8%, whereas in Portugal it was approximately 20%. Inappropriate diagnosis and treatment contribute to this problem, which results in a continued high prevalence in our country.

**T**he name anemia comes from the Greek anamía, which means “lack of blood”. Blood is made up of plasma, red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets. Production takes place in the bone marrow.

Anemia is currently defined as a decrease in the number of red blood cells or the concentration of hemoglobin in the blood. This molecule transports oxygen to all body cells, without which they cannot function efficiently. With anemia, the lack of oxygen supply to the cells is compromised, frequently affecting the individual's quality of life. This condition can have negative

implications for work and family life, resulting in a negative economic impact due to the reduction of not only physical but also cognitive productivity.

Although it can occur at any stage of life, anemia is more common during periods of high metabolism, such as growth and pregnancy, or due to physiological bleeding, such as during menstruation and pathological, such as digestive. There is a high incidence in the elderly, often with a multifactorial cause. For these reasons, normal parameters vary according to age, sex and stage of life.

Anemia is detected by performing a complete blood count analysis and

observation of a peripheral blood smear. Investigation of its etiology should be carried out even in people that are asymptomatic. The various causes of anemia can be of a hereditary origin (thalassemia), hemolytic, iron deficiencies (the most common), vitamin B12 or folic acid, blood loss or other conditions such as infectious/inflammatory diseases, neoplasms, chronic and/or immune diseases.

Warning signs and symptoms are mucocutaneous pallor, physical and mental fatigue, loss of concentration, palpitations, dizziness, headache, drowsiness, irritability, loss of appetite, shortness of breath, intestinal or gynecological blood loss, jaundice,



dark urine or weight loss.

Since iron deficiency anemia is the most common cause, in addition to identifying and preventing its causes, it can be prevented with a balanced diet that includes meat, fish, fruit, green leafy vegetables and moderate consumption of milk or tea, especially when taken together with the main meals (lunch and din-

ner). Vitamin C present in citrus fruit, kiwi and broccoli plays an important role in the absorption of iron. It is also important to remember that a vegetarian diet can cause anemia due to vitamin B12 deficiency. Alcohol abuse can trigger anemia due to a folate deficiency.

The treatment of anemia depends on its etiology and aims to restore normal

levels of hemoglobin and red blood cells in order to maintain adequate tissue oxygenation without clinical repercussions.

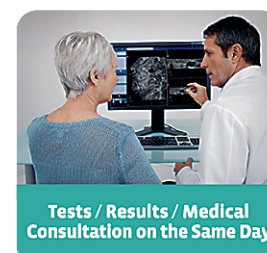
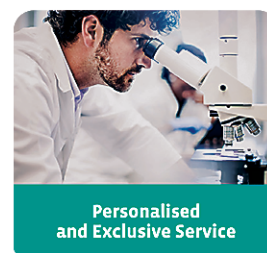
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