



A N E M I A

Early in your pregnancy and after your 20th week of pregnancy we draw blood to test for iron deficiency. Many women are not iron deficient early in their pregnancy, but may become deficient when the maternal blood volume increases, the fetus is growing and the need for iron is greater because the amount of iron needed to produce red blood cells gradually increases. This is when anemia develops.

Iron deficiency is easily corrected. A diet high in iron-rich foods and an iron supplement (Ferrous Sulfate) is often needed to help keep you from being anemic. Some **examples of iron-rich foods** are:

Beef/Turkey	Nuts	Sunflower Seeds
Enriched breakfast cereals	Baked potato with skin	Canned beans
Enriched pasta	Brown Rice	Green beans
Cream of Wheat	Cheese or pepperoni pizza	Peas

*See reverse for additional dietary sources of iron.

In addition to eating iron-rich foods, certain foods can enhance or inhibit the absorption of iron when **eaten in the same meal**. Some examples are:

<i>Iron Absorption Enhancers</i>	
Meat/fish/poultry	Cantaloupe
Oranges	Orange Juice
Strawberries	Broccoli
Tomato	Potatoes

<i>Iron Absorption Inhibitors</i>	
Coffee	Tea
Spinach	Sweet Potatoes
Soy Products	Whole Grain/Bran

There are often few signs or anemia at first, but as anemia worsens the oxygen-carrying red blood cells are depleted. Some symptoms associated with anemia are:

- Paleness
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Palpitations
- Breathlessness
- Fainting

Babies of anemic mothers are rarely iron deficient because the baby's needs are met before the mothers. In addition, babies born to anemic mothers have a slight risk of being small or premature.

When an iron supplement (ferrous sulfate) is taken, be aware that iron can cause constipation, so increase the fiber in your diet, drink plenty of fluids and exercise. If constipation continues, discontinue taking the iron for a couple of days until you've had a good bowel movement then restart the iron again. Iron can also cause stools to be black, so don't be alarmed. This is normal.