

# ANEMIA, HEMOLYTIC

NOLENSVILLE FAMILY MEDICINE  
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## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

An anemia that is due to red blood cells being destroyed faster than the bone marrow can produce them. In the intrinsic type, the destruction is due to a defect in the red blood cells themselves. In the extrinsic type, healthy red blood cells are produced, but are destroyed in the spleen. Hemolytic anemia can affect all ages.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sometimes there are no symptoms. The anemia may be diagnosed on a routine health exam.
- Fatigue and weakness.
- Pale skin, eyes, and fingernails.
- Shortness of breath.
- Irregular heartbeat.
- Jaundice (yellow skin and eyes, dark urine).

### CAUSES

Bone marrow cannot produce red blood cells fast enough to make up for those being destroyed. This is a process known as hemolysis. More than 200 causes for hemolysis exist. Some are due to inherited disorders and some are acquired disorders. Sometimes, the cause is unknown.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Inherited disorders. These include hereditary spherocytosis, glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency, sickle cell anemia, or thalassemia.
- Infections such as hepatitis, cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus, typhoid fever, streptococcus, or *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*).
- Leukemia or lymphoma.
- Use of certain drugs, such as penicillin, antimalarials, sulfa, or acetaminophen.
- Various tumors.
- Family history of hemolytic anemia.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't take any drugs that have previously caused hemolytic anemia.
- Seek genetic counseling before having children if you have a family history of hemolytic anemia (inherited forms).

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- If hemolytic anemia is acquired, it can usually be cured when the cause, such as a drug, is stopped.
- If it is due to an underlying disorder, the outcome depends on the course of the primary disease.
- If hemolytic anemia is inherited, it is currently considered incurable. However, symptoms can be relieved or controlled.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Varies depending on the cause of the anemia.
- It may cause existing heart or lung disease to worsen.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Medical tests include blood and urine studies. Other tests may be done to help diagnose an underlying cause for anemia.
- Treatment depends on the specific hemolytic problem. Treatment may include drugs, blood transfusions, stopping drugs, or surgery.
- Blood transfusion therapy may be needed.
- Surgical removal of the spleen may be recommended.

### MEDICATIONS

- Drugs will be prescribed depending on the specific cause of anemia. These may include corticosteroids, immune globulin, folic acid, iron therapy, and others.
- Drugs that are causing the anemia will be stopped.

### ACTIVITY

No limits, except those caused by the symptoms.

### DIET

No special diet. Fava beans should be avoided in certain patients (you will be advised).



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of hemolytic anemia.
- Fever, cough, sore throat, swollen joints, muscle aches, or bloody urine occur during treatment.  
Signs of infection in any part of the body (redness, pain, swelling, fever).
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

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Special notes:

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More notes on the back of this page