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• **ANEMIA.**

Anemia is a common clinical condition in children, that leads to decreased oxygenation of organs and tissues, and this situation especially affects the developing brain in the first two years of life and, strikingly, an irreversible lowering of the potential IQ can be the end result.

For this reason, among others, it is absolutely necessary to prevent this disease.

• **Potential causes of anemia:**

- a) Iron deficiency: this is the most common cause of childhood anemia, it is usually a consequence of excessive whole milk or dairy products intake because these interfere and decrease the absorption of iron and it also conditions intestinal irritation that leads to chronic occult blood loss.
- b) Deficiency of folic acid, vitamin B-12, copper or vitamin E: these are less frequent causes of anemia, they are usually suspected or diagnosed on a routine complete blood count.
- c) Chronic blood loss: this happens because of occult bleeding through urine or feces, many times due to the presence of parasites.
- d) Congenital anemia: these are hereditary and kids show signs of hemolysis in the first year of life, plus they are much less frequent and tend to affect specific racial groups such as african - american, asian - american and mediterranean. Diagnosis and treatment require specialized care.
- e) Lead poisoning: lead is a well-known cause of childhood anemia. Lead screening or questionnaire must be done between 6 months and 2 years of age to all children.

- Symptoms and signs of anemia:

- a) General fatigue, general weakness, irritability or lassitude.
- b) Rapid heart rate, rapid breathing, swelling of hands and feet.
- c) "Pica", this means eating dirt, play-dough, pebbles and the like.

- Diagnosis of childhood anemia:

- a) Hemoglobin screening test, 6-12 months old & 2-5 years old.
- b) Lead screening test, 9-12 months old & 2-4 years old.

- Treatment of childhood anemia:

- a) Proper diet with foods rich in iron, folic acid and vitamin B-12: green leafy vegetables, beans, broccoli, tomatoes, potatoes with skin, egg yolk, lean red meats, iron fortified juices and cereals.
- b) Introduce whole milk until the baby is 12 - 18 months old. Restrict whole milk intake to 8 oz twice daily, no more.
- c) When your pediatrician indicates treatment for anemia, follow these instructions:
 - i) Iron should preferably be taken with vitamin C or citrus juice.
 - ii) Iron should not be taken with milk.
 - iii) Iron may stain children's teeth, but no need to worry because this is reversible and the staining resolves when iron therapy is stopped.