

## **IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA**

Anemia can be caused by many different conditions including pregnancy. Iron deficiency anemia is a type of anemia that occurs when there is not enough iron to make the hemoglobin portion of the red blood cells. When the amount of hemoglobin is reduced, fewer red blood cells are formed, and the cells that are formed are smaller.

### **SYMPTOMS**

Many women with anemia have no symptoms. Some of the most common symptoms are;

- Weakness
- Headache
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Pica (an abnormal craving to eat non-food items, such as clay or dirt, paper products, cornstarch)

### **TREATMENT**

After determining the cause of anemia it is important to begin treatment. The majority of pregnant patients can be treated successfully with oral iron.

- Iron is best absorbed if taken every other day for example Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- Certain foods interfere with the absorption of iron. In general iron should not be taken with food, antibiotics, coffee, tea, or milk. Iron should be taken one hour before or two hours after these items.
- If you take antacids, iron should be taken two hours before or four hours after the antacids.
- Iron tablets are best absorbed in an acidic environment taking tablets with 250 mg of vitamin C or orange juice.

### **IRON & DIET**

Although dietary iron is important in preventing iron deficiency anemia, people with iron deficiency anemia need more iron than they can consume through their diet. Therefore increasing dietary iron alone is not generally recommended as a treatment for iron deficiency anemia. We recommend the combination of iron supplements and diet.

## **IRON RICH FOODS**

- Dark green leafy vegetables (spinach)
- Iron fortified breads & cereals
- Almonds
- Dried peas & beans
- Lean red meats
- Pork
- Scallops
- Turkey

\*Consuming iron rich foods in combination with vitamin C will increase absorption of iron.