Cumbria Advisory Thyroid Service



INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMATION SHEET *PERNICIOUS ANAEMIA*

In anaemia there is not enough haemoglobin available to carry sufficient oxygen from the lungs to supply the needs of the tissues. It occurs when the rate of production of mature cells entering the blood from the red bone marrow does not keep pace with the rate of haemolysis (destruction of red blood cells). The classification of anaemia is based on the cause. There are several types the two main being:
Iron Deficiency Anaemia - caused either by lack of iron in the diet, loss of blood or malabsorption. Symptoms are increased heart-rate, palpitations and breathlessness.

Pernicious Anaemia - one of the megaloblastic anaemias caused by deficiency of Vitamin B12. It occurs more often in females, usually between the ages of 45 and 65 years of age. It is an autoimmune disease in which auto-antibodies destroy Intrinsic Factor and parietal cells in the stomach. It is very rare for this to be caused by dietary factors.

Pernicious Anaemia is usually present before the diagnosis of thyroid dysfunction - but can be mistaken purely as part of the hypothyroid symptoms, therefore not being diagnosed until several years later when the patient still complains of not feeling well after thyroid medication. It is one of the many conditions associated with thyroid dysfunctions.

The symptoms include those of iron deficiency anaemia - tiredness, breathlessness, dizziness, numbness, mouth and tongue soreness, tingling in hands and feet, loss of balance and leg weakness. The doctor may find you to be very pale, with loss of sensation in the legs, psychological problems and even dementia. You may also have a fever.

A blood count showing low haemoglobin and large red blood cells strongly suggests the diagnosis, which is proved by measuring Vitamin B12 levels. Other, more detailed tests may be done. The treatment is vitamin B12 injections every few months. The response is often dramatic - both in disappearance of the anaemia and the relief of other symptoms. The treatment is lifelong. People with pernicious anaemia do not make much gastric acid as other people - any indigestion problems must be investigated promptly.

Vitamin supplements of B12 are available over the counter, but as a thyroid sufferer it is important to refer any of the above ongoing symptoms to your General Practitioner for the necessary blood tests. A normal, healthy balanced diet should supply this vitamin - and is only usually necessary as a supplement in pregnancy, or for those on strict vegan diets.

References: The British Medical Association new Guide to Medicine and Drugs
Ross & Wilson Anatomy & Physiology in Health and Illness
Thyroid Disorders by Dr Rowan Hillson
The Thyroid Solution by Ridha Arem, M.D.

C.A.T.S RECOMMENDS YOU ALWAYS SEEK YOUR DOCTORS ADVICE

Disclaimer

The purpose of this information leaflet is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by CATS and it is recommended and essential, that if in any doubt about your condition, that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice.