

Anemia prevention and control

Anemia is the world's second leading cause of disability and thus one of the most serious global public health problems. Anemia affects over half of pre-school children and pregnant women in developing countries and at least 30-40% in industrialized countries. In poorer malaria endemic countries anemia is one of the most common preventable causes of death in children under 5 years and in pregnant women.

Reducing the burden of anemia will make a major contribution to achieving several UN Millennium Development Goals. Since the greatest burden of anemia falls on the most "hard-to-reach" individuals, any program that aims to reduce anemia will need to be accessible by these groups. Primary health care policies and programs must be a cornerstone of health care systems. Interventions which have been shown to impact on anemia include improving nutrition and iron status and treating helminthic and malaria infections.

The WHO Anaemia Working Group first met in June 2000 to review the relationship between haemoglobin concentrations and clinically symptomatic anaemia, with particular focus on cut-off levels for blood donation. This is why the Secretariat of the Group has traditionally been housed in the Department of Essential Health Technologies.

Early detection of anemia in pregnant women is reflected in the vision of the Making Pregnancy Safer initiative. HIV/AIDS guidelines state that a hemoglobin estimation and HIV test are the absolute minimum before anti-retroviral therapy, meaning that simple, reliable and affordable screening tools must be widely available if 3 million people are to receive ARVs by 2005.

Questions: (Express your ideas)

- 1. What are the clinical manifestations of anemia?**
- 2. How can we prevent anemia?**
- 3. In what age group is this common in your country?**
- 4. Why is early detection of anemia in pregnant women very important?**
- 5. Can anemia cause a miscarriage? Why?**
- 6. What are some health teachings that you can give to your patients to promote health?**