

* These instructions are only to be followed if the nurse tells you that you are thrombocytopenic.

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Thrombocytopenia (Low Platelets)

What is it?

- Thrombocytopenia is when you have low levels of platelets. Platelets are blood cells that prevent bleeding and are produced in the bone marrow. Chemotherapy can affect your bone marrow, disrupting your body's ability to produce platelets.
- Chemo-induced Thrombocytopenia typically occurs 6-10 days after chemotherapy and continues for several days before levels return to normal. Your next chemo treatment may be delayed if your platelets don't return to normal.
- Thrombocytopenia can also be caused by the cancer itself, radiation treatments, certain medical conditions, and certain medications.

What are the symptoms?

- Pinpoint red, rash-like spots (called petechiae) anywhere on your body
- Easy bruising
- Sudden bleeding from your nose or gums
- Blood in your stool or urine
- Unusually heavy menstrual bleeding

What should I do?

- Use a soft-bristle toothbrush to keep your gums from bleeding. Avoid using dental floss and mouthwash with alcohol.
- Use stool softeners to prevent straining with bowel movements, but **don't** use suppositories.
- Use an electric razor to reduce the risk of cuts.
- Don't take aspirin or aspirin products.
- Avoid forceful coughing or blowing of your nose.
- Avoid activities such as sports in which you could fall or get bumped or bruised.
- Avoid spicy foods and alcohol.
- Keep lips and mouth lubricated.
- Avoid douches, vaginal suppositories or tampons.
- Avoid sexual intercourse if platelets are less than 50,000.
- Avoid the use of adhesive tapes.

How is it treated?

- In most cases, your body can tolerate a reduced platelet count without any medical intervention, except for monitoring your bloodwork.
- If your platelet count becomes very low (less than 10,000) or you are experiencing bleeding problems, you may need a platelet transfusion. This is similar to a blood transfusion, but with platelet in place of red blood cells.

When to call the nurse:

- If you develop severe bruising, active/excessive bleeding, petechiae (pinpoint red rash), or any changes in mental status (confusion, sleepiness) you need to call the nurse.