

Thrombocytopenia: When your platelets are low

Platelets are blood cells that help to clot blood. Thrombocytopenia is usually a temporary condition caused by chemotherapy, and/or radiation treatments. Your platelet count will reach its lowest point (nadir) about 7-14 days after chemotherapy. When your platelet count falls below a certain range, you are at risk for bleeding and bruising.

Call your doctor right away for:

- ✓ *Bad headache*
- ✓ *Blurred vision*
- ✓ *Confusion*
- ✓ *New bleeding or bleeding that won't stop from the mouth, nose, vagina, rectum, or urethra*
- ✓ *Red or pink urine.*
- ✓ *Black or bloody stool*
- ✓ *New bruising*
- ✓ *New tiny red spots on your skin (petechiae)*

To stop a nosebleed: Hold bridge of nose for at least 10 minutes. An ice bag can be used too. Still bleeding? Go to the Emergency room.

To stop bleeding: Put a clean cloth on the area and press for at least 10 minutes. Still bleeding? Go to the Emergency room.

Things to do:

- Only use an electric razor.
- Wear solid shoes or slippers when out of bed.
- Gentle perianal care with sitz bath or spray bottle, pat dry.
- Protect skin from the sun.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Prevent constipation.
- For intercourse, use a water-soluble lubricant. No intercourse if platelets are extremely low.
- Blow nose gently.
- Use gloves for changing diapers, housecleaning, and gardening.
- Use heavy oven mitts for cooking.
- Use only Tylenol, if needed.

- Tell ALL your doctors that you may have low platelets.

Things to avoid:

- Contact sports.
- Cutting or bumping yourself.
- Rectal enemas, suppositories, and temperatures.
- Dental work or elective surgery.
- Alcohol.
- Tight clothing.
- Vaginal douches and tampons (wear sanitary napkins).
- Aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine, such as Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Indocin, or Naprosyn.
- Manicures and pedicures.

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