

Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)

Side Effects – Symptoms & Solutions

What is Low Platelet Count - Thrombocytopenia?

Platelets are the cells within the bloodstream that make your blood clot. Therefore, when there is a decrease in the number of platelets, there is a chance that bleeding will occur. Platelets are produced in the bone marrow, which is suppressed with chemo. Avoid injuries to prevent bleeding and infection.

Follow these instructions to reduce the risk of bleeding while your platelets are low:

1. *Mouth*
 - a. Brush after meals with a soft toothbrush.
 - b. Rinse with baking soda and water or salt water.
 - c. Avoid mouthwashes with high alcohol content.
 - d. Avoid dental floss.
 - e. Lubricate lips with petroleum jelly.
2. *Nose*
 - a. Avoid forceful nose blowing (if necessary, blow very gently through both nostrils simultaneously.)
 - b. Use a room humidifier.
 - c. If a nosebleed occurs, sit upright, tilt head forward, allowing blood to drip out. Apply firm pressure with your thumb and forefinger to the area of the nostrils below the bridge of the nose for 20 minutes.
3. *Skin*
 - a. Wear gloves for washing dishes or doing yard work.
 - b. Use an electric razor for shaving.
 - c. Use an emery board for nail care; do not cut nails.
 - d. Avoid tight fitting clothes.
4. *Bottom*
 - a. Avoid straining during bowel movements.
 - b. Do not use suppositories or harsh laxatives.
 - c. Exercise regularly by walking to avoid constipation.
5. *Diet*
 - a. Eat a soft, bland diet high in protein and calories.
 - b. Drink plenty of fluids.
 - c. Avoid foods that are excessively hot, cold, hard, rough, or spicy.
6. *Exercise*
 - a. Do not lift heavy objects.
 - b. Avoid strenuous activity that may cause bruising, falling, or other physical injury.
7. *Sex*
 - a. Avoid sexual intercourse if your platelets are very low (less than 50,000) or if so advised by your physician.
 - b. Use a water-based lubricant prior to sexual intercourse.
8. *Medications*
 - a. Avoid medication that may cause or prolong bleeding (aspirin, coumadin, quinidine, ibuprofen, indomethacin.) Ask your health care provider if any of your medications may cause or prolong bleeding.
 - b. Be sure to check with your physician before taking any medications at home.

REMEMBER TO:

Call your physician or nurse if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Prolonged nosebleed (after following instructions in #2 above,) rectal bleeding, any unusual bleeding.
- Increased bruising or multiple red spots on skin.
- Before taking any new medications.
- Any questions about precautions during sexual activity.