



Bleeding Precautions for Patients with Low Platelets

What are platelets?

Platelets are cells in your blood that help stop bleeding. A normal platelet count range is 150,000-400,000. Your platelet count may be lower than normal because of the cancer or its treatment.

Call the Hematology/Oncology clinic at (734) 647-8901 if you have any of these:

Skin changes

- Bruises on your arms or legs, with or without injury
- Pinpoint- size red or purple spots on your skin

Head or vision changes

- Blurred or double vision
- New onset of headaches or headaches that changed character or don't get better

Bleeding

- Bleeding from your mouth or gums
- Blood in the urine, stool, vomit, spit (of any amount)
- Long or heavy menstrual flow
- Nosebleeds or bleeding that does not stop after applying pressure for 5-10 minutes
- Vomiting blood or coughing up blood

If you start to bleed, put a clean cloth over the site and apply firm pressure for 5-10 minutes. If you get a nose bleed apply pressure and ice to the bridge of your nose and keep your head tilted forward.

The following tips will help prevent you from bleeding:

- Use an electric shaver, not a razor.
- Use a soft toothbrush when brushing your teeth.
- Avoid using dental floss and tooth picks. They may cause your gums to bleed.
- Do not have dental work done without your doctor's approval. If you must have dental work, tell your dentist that you have a low platelet count.
- Do not take any over-the-counter drugs without your doctor's approval. It is very important that you avoid aspirin and other drugs that contain aspirin. If you are not sure about a drug, ask your doctor.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Wear shoes or slippers to protect your feet from cuts.
- Wear gloves when gardening, doing dishes and home repairs.
- Do not use nail clippers. Use an emery board to file your nails.
- Do not strain with bowel movements. Eat a diet high in fiber and drink a lot of water to avoid being constipated. If you are having problems passing stool or have constipation, use a stool softener and/or other laxative as prescribed. You can try: Colace[®], Senakot[®] or Miralax[®]. If you continue to have trouble passing stool or drugs are not working, call the Hematology/Oncology clinic.
- Do not put anything into your rectum, not even a thermometer or medicine.
- Do not use tampons. Use pads instead.
- Women with a low platelet count should use a water-based lubricant during sexual intercourse (KY Jelly[®] or Astroglide[®]).
- Avoid any activity that may cause injury. This includes contact sports like soccer and basketball, along with climbing ladders, and strenuous activities.

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