

Coping with Thrombocytopenia

What is thrombocytopenia?

This is a term for a low platelet count. Platelets are blood cells that help your blood to clot. When your platelets are low, you may bruise or bleed more easily.

Signs of low platelets include:

- A lot of bruises
- Bleeding gums
- Nosebleeds
- Tiny purple spots on the feet or legs.

How is it treated?

If your platelets are too low or you have active bleeding, you may need a platelet transfusion. In this case, we would give you donated platelets through an IV line (a small tube in your vein). This usually takes one to two hours.

You will need blood tests to see how well your treatment is working.

What can I do to prevent bleeding?

Until your platelets are back to normal, you need to reduce your risk for bleeding or bruising.

- Do not have surgery or dental work.
- Do not take medicine unless your care team says it's okay. This includes:
 - Aspirin or products that contain aspirin
 - Aspirin-free pain relievers (such as Advil).

Be sure to read the labels on any store-bought medicines.

- Do not drink alcohol unless your care team says it's okay.
- Avoid foods that can make your mouth bleed, including popcorn, chips and raw vegetables.
- To avoid injuries:
 - Make your home as safe as possible.
 - Take care when using knives and other tools.
 - Be careful not to burn yourself when ironing or cooking.
 - Wear heavy gloves when working in the garden or near thorny plants.
 - Wear shoes when you walk.
 - Wear loose-fitting clothes to prevent bruising.

- Do low-impact exercise such as walking or swimming. Avoid contact sports.
- Keep your lips moist with lip balm. Keep your skin soft with cream or lotion.
- Blow your nose gently. Never use your fingers to clean your nose.
- Use an electric razor.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Do not floss.
- Use a water-based gel during sex (intercourse), such as K-Y Jelly or Astroglide. Do not have sex if your platelets are below 50,000.
- Do not use enemas, suppositories, douches or tampons.
- Try not to strain when using the toilet. Ask your care team if you need a stool softener (such as Colace).

When should I call my care team?

Call your care team if:

- You bleed from a cut or wound and it doesn't stop within 30 minutes of applying pressure.
- You notice blood in your urine or stool after using the toilet.
- You see blood or dark brown spots in your vomit.
- You have nosebleeds, bleeding gums or headaches that you cannot explain.
- You see tiny, pinpoint-sized red or purple spots on your skin.
- You have heavy bleeding from the vagina (you are soaking one pad an hour) or any change in your periods. This includes heavier bleeding or bleeding between cycles.

Comments:
