

# Managing Bleeding

Thrombocytopenia is the term for a low platelet count. Platelets are cells that help your blood clot when you bleed. Chemotherapy treatment can cause you to have a low platelet count temporarily. This often happens seven to 10 days after treatment and gets better within two to six weeks. Decreased platelets may affect treatment that day or may cause a hold on treatment. Your doctor can adjust your treatment plan if your platelets are low.

## What you can do

- Use a very soft toothbrush when brushing your teeth.
- Blow your nose gently.
- Drink plenty of water and eat plenty of fiber to avoid constipation.



- Use an electric razor, no blades for shaving.
- Trim your fingernails or toenails very carefully.
- Use knives, scissors and other tools carefully.
- Avoid activities that may lead to injuries.
- Apply pressure to the area after blood draws.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse before having sex.

## What to do if you are bleeding

- For nosebleeds, pinch your nostrils closed while placing ice on your nose. Sit up and lean forward to keep the blood from dripping down your throat. Keep holding your nostrils for five minutes, then let go and check to see if the bleeding has stopped.
- For bleeding from cuts or open areas on skin, apply pressure with a towel or cloth until the bleeding stops. If the bleeding does not stop within a few minutes, contact your doctor. For severe bleeding, call 911.

## What not to do

- Do not use dental floss or toothpicks if your platelets are low.
- Do not play sports or participate in activities that may cause injury.
- Do not use tampons, enemas, suppositories or rectal thermometers.
- Do not wear clothing or shoes that are tight fitting.
- Do not strain when you have a bowel movement.
- Do not blow your nose or cough forcefully.
- Do not take anti-inflammatory medicines (such as ibuprofen, naproxen or others with aspirin) unless instructed by your doctor.

### When to call your doctor or nurse

- Bleeding gums with or without brushing your teeth
- Bruising without injury
- Bleeding from nose, mouth or rectum
- Rash with tiny red dots, usually starting on feet and legs
- Pink or red urine
- Black or bloody bowel movements
- More than usual amount of vaginal bleeding during your monthly periods
- Bad headaches, dizziness or blurred vision
- Trouble speaking or moving



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