



## THROMBOCYTOPENIC PRECAUTIONS

Patients receiving chemotherapy may experience a decrease in the number of platelets, also known as **thrombocytopenia**. Platelets are blood cells whose major function is to help your blood clot and keep you from bleeding or hemorrhaging. Thrombocytopenia can be caused by chemotherapy, radiation therapy, immunotherapy, other medications and certain diseases including cancer.

**Definition:** Thrombocytopenia – an abnormal decrease in the number of platelets which may result in an increased potential for bleeding, hemorrhaging, and/or complications associated from extensive bleeding.

The following are instructions to help reduce your risk of serious injury, bleeding and/or hemorrhaging during the period of time that your platelet count is below normal.

- Use a soft bristled toothbrush. Avoid flossing.
- Do not blow your nose forcefully.
- Avoid constipation and straining to have a bowel movement.
  - ✓ Drink plenty of fluids.
  - ✓ Increase fiber in your diet.
  - ✓ Use stool softeners.
  - ✓ Do not use enemas or suppositories.
  - ✓ If unable to relieve constipation with the above suggestions, notify your physician.
- Avoid all beverages containing alcohol.
- Use an electric razor (no razor blades).
- Avoid any activity that can put you at risk of injury (contact sports, etc.).
- Avoid all aspirin or medication containing aspirin.
- Avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as Indocin, Advil and Motrin, unless prescribed by the physician who is aware of your platelet count.
- If you are on any blood thinning medication, such as Coumadin or Heparin, notify your physician.

- Do not take any medications by injection into your muscle (IM injection).
  - Do not take any medication or temperature rectally.
  - Do not use rectal dilators. Avoid straining, bending at the waist or lifting heavy objects.
  - Avoid activities that can cause injury to your skin (e.g., peeling crawfish, opening oysters and crabs, yard work, etc.).
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## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF THROMBOCYTOPENIA**

Signs and symptoms of thrombocytopenia (low platelet count) that should be reported to your nurse and/or physician are listed below.

- Excessive bruising on the skin (particularly if not associated with injury).
- Tiny red or larger purple spots on the skin.
- Bleeding from the gums or nose.
- Black or red blood in the stool.
- Blood in the urine.
- Light headedness, dizziness or changes in level of consciousness.
- Scleral bleeding (rupture of blood vessels in the eyes).

Should you experience an injury to the skin that will not stop bleeding, apply ice and pressure to the area and notify your physician immediately.

In the event you experience any of the above signs and symptoms, report them to your physician immediately at 985-542-5000 (Hammond) or 225-644-1205 (Gonzales).

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## **AFTER HOURS**

If you need immediate emergency medical attention, please dial 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. All other medical attention outside of the Center's regular office hours (8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday) will be answered by our telephone answering service who will have a doctor from Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center return your call.

TELEPHONE:

**Essen:** (225) 767-0847

**Woman's:** (225) 215-7100

**Gonzales:** (225) 664-1205

**Hammond:** (985) 542-5000

**Covington:** (985) 875-2234

**Houma:** (985) 876-9045

**Natchez:** (601) 442-1285