



NEUTROPENIC PRECAUTIONS

Patients receiving cancer treatments may experience a decrease in the number of white blood cells (neutrophils) that are responsible for fighting infection. When patients experience this, it is referred to as neutropenia. It can be caused by chemotherapy, radiation therapy, immunotherapy, other medications and certain diseases including cancer. When the level of these specific types of white blood cells, also called neutrophils, is extremely low, patients have a much greater risk of developing an infection. Other patients may have difficulty fighting infection because the specific illness they have affects their body's immune system. The immune system helps our bodies recognize bacteria, viruses and other organisms that can cause infection and illness.

The following are instructions to help reduce your risk of infection.

- Remain in a clean environment. Avoid large crowds.
- Avoid having visitors or people in your home with any kind of contagious illness (flu, cold, diarrhea, etc.).
- Avoid children who have been recently vaccinated.
- Avoid all sources of stagnant water (humidifier, vaporizer, dental cup, soap dish, vases with fresh flowers).
- Avoid fresh uncooked fruits and vegetables (cooked fruits and vegetables are okay).
- Avoid eating or peeling all shellfish (oysters, crawfish and crabs).
- Avoid rectal medications, such as suppositories or rectal dilators.
- Avoid enemas and rectal temperatures.
- Avoid newspapers.
- Avoid fresh flowers and plants.
- Avoid trauma (cuts, scrapes, etc.).
- Perform frequent, thorough personal hygiene.
 - ✓ Bathe daily with a mild soap.
 - ✓ Perform mouth care after meals and at bedtime.

- ✓ Cleanse the perineal/rectal area after each bowel movement with warm water.
- Remain active and perform deep breathing exercises.
- Maintain good nutrition and drink plenty of fluids.
 - ✓ Eat a high protein, high calorie diet.
 - ✓ Drink at least eight (8) 8-oz. glasses of liquid daily.
- Check with your physician before having any dental work done.
- Avoid any injections (with the exception of **Neupogen**, a medication administered by injection to decrease your risk of infection).
- Check your temperature at least daily and/or at any time you feel like you have a fever. If you have a fever, begin to check your temperature at least every four (4) hours.
- Apply an antibiotic ointment, such as Neosporin, to any breaks in the skin (cuts, scrapes, etc.).
- If you experience any of the following signs/symptoms of an infection, notify your physician at 985-542-5000 (Hammond) or 225-644-1205 (Gonzales).
 - ✓ Fever greater than 100.5°
 - ✓ Flu-like symptoms (aches, pains, chills)
 - ✓ Diarrhea lasting longer than 24 hours
 - ✓ Sores in the mouth
 - ✓ Sore throat
 - ✓ Burning on urination
 - ✓ New cough or shortness of breath

In the event an infection occurs, it can usually be treated and managed with antibiotics. These medications are much more successful in treating an infection the earlier a patient starts receiving them. Therefore, prompt recognition and reporting of signs/symptoms are very important.

The above instructions, if followed, can reduce the chance of developing a serious infection while you are neutropenic. It does not, however, guarantee that you will not develop an infection.

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

| PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS |

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