The Adult Patient with Thrombocytopenia

Thank you for choosing us for your health care needs. This information is to help answer some of your questions and to give you instructions to follow. If you have any other questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Thrombocytopenia is a low blood count of platelets. Platelets help your blood to clot. When your platelet count is very low, you can start bleeding without being injured.

Normal platelet counts range from 150,000 to 450,000. Your doctor or nurse will begin to use “thrombocytopenia precautions” when your platelet count is below 50,000. These precautions help prevent serious bleeding.

Platelet transfusions may be given if your platelet count is very low or if your platelets are not working well enough to prevent bleeding.

Help protect yourself from bleeding by following thrombocytopenia precautions

1. Do not strain to have a bowel movement. Take stool softeners to keep stool soft. Let your doctor know if you need a stronger laxative to relieve constipation.
2. Do not place anything in your rectum: thermometer, suppositories, or enemas.
3. Help protect your mouth from injury by using a soft toothbrush. Do not floss your teeth. Use ¼ teaspoon of salt or baking soda in eight ounces of water for mouthwash. Check with your doctor before having dental work done.
4. Avoid bending with your head lower than your shoulders.
5. Avoid activities that can cause cuts or other injuries (gardening, working with saws, walking barefoot).
6. Use an electric razor for shaving.
7. Do not take any “over the counter” medicines that slow blood clotting such as aspirin. Ask your doctor if any of your prescription drugs prolong bleeding.
8. Do not take drugs that irritate your stomach.
9. Do not drink alcohol.
10. Do not blow your nose forcefully. Talk to your doctor about medication to help prevent forceful sneezing, coughing, or vomiting, as needed.
11. Women should use sanitary pads instead of tampons.
Report the following signs of bleeding to your doctor:

- Petechiae, which are small reddish-purplish dot-like bleeding areas under the skin
- Bruising easily
- Bruises that get bigger
- Red or dark urine, or red or black stools
- Menstrual bleeding (periods) that are long or unusually heavy
- Any bleeding that continues to ooze, such as nose bleeds or bleeding gums, sores, puncture sites or cuts

The following remedies may help control minor bleeding:

1. Hold pressure on the bleeding site with your finger and a gauze until the bleeding stops. Then apply a pressure dressing
2. If your nose bleeds, sit up straight; put pressure below the bridge of your nose. Call your doctor or go to the Emergency Room if your nose keeps bleeding longer than a few minutes

Seek immediate medical attention for signs of serious bleeding:

1. Headache
2. Change in level of awareness
3. Eye pain or change in vision
4. Any new pain that comes and stays
5. Dizziness when you try to sit or stand
6. Vomiting of coffee ground material or blood
7. Coughing up blood
8. Bloody or black stools

Keep your appointments for follow-up platelet counts

Telephone contact numbers:

Answering Service: __________________________

Local Doctor: _______________________________

MCG Doctor:________________________________