

# Preventing Bleeding When You Have a Low Platelet Count

Platelets are a type of blood cell made in your bone marrow. They help stop bleeding. A normal platelet count is 150,000-300,000. A low platelet count may put you at higher risk for bleeding. A low platelet count may be caused by cancer, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or other reasons. Medicine or a transfusion may be needed if the platelet count is low and if there is bleeding or risk of bleeding.

**Use these safety measures when your platelets are below 50,000:**

## General Tips

- Remove area rugs and avoid activities where you could get bumps, falls and cuts.
- Ask for help with walking if you are not steady.
- Be sure your doctors know all of your medicines including prescriptions, over the counter medicines, herbals and supplements. Many have side effects that affect your platelet count.
- Do not take aspirin or any drugs containing aspirin.
- Avoid sexual intercourse, tampons and douches.

## Skin Care

- Check your skin each day for new cuts, bruises, rashes or other injuries.
- Put ice on new bruises or injuries and put pressure on cuts for at least 5 minutes.
- Avoid using sharp tools such as razors, scissors, needles, knives, nail clippers or others that could cause injury. Use an electric razor for shaving and an emery board for nail care.
- Do not go barefoot.
- Do not wear tight fitting clothes or elastic sleeves.

## Mouth Care

- Check your mouth each day for bleeding gums.
- Eat soft foods. Avoid rough foods such as nuts and raw carrots.
- Use a lip moisturizer to prevent dry or cracked lips.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Do not use dental floss, an electric toothbrush or toothpicks.

- Do not wear retainers or dentures that do not fit well. Take your dentures off for least 8 hours each day.
- Use gauze soaked in salt water to clean your teeth if your platelets are below 20,000. Rub gently around your gums.

### **Nose and Breathing Care**

- Use a cool mist humidifier in dry air, especially in the winter.
- Use soft tissues to gently blow your nose.
- If you have a nosebleed, sit up and pinch your nose to apply pressure.

### **Stomach Care**

- Drink plenty of liquids, eat healthy meals and exercise to avoid constipation.
- Avoid foods that upset your stomach. Tell your doctor if you are having problems with nausea.
- Do not use enemas, suppositories or a rectal thermometer.
- Do not strain when having a bowel movement.

### **Call your doctor if you have:**

- A red rash
- Unexplained bruises or bruises that get bigger
- Bleeding that does not stop
- Bleeding gums
- A nose bleed that lasts longer than 10 minutes
- A cough with blood
- Vomit that looks like coffee grounds or with blood in it
- Constipation, dark or tarry stools, or blood in your stool

### **Call your doctor right away if you have:**

- Blurred vision
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Loss of coordination or muscle strength
- Loss of feeling in hands or feet

### **Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**