

## Low Platelet Count

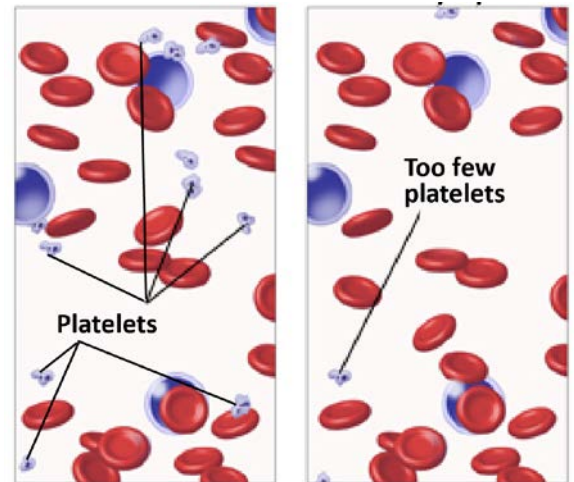
### *About thrombocytopenia*

#### What are platelets?

*Platelets* are tiny blood cells. They help your body form blood clots to stop bleeding if you have an injury.

#### What is thrombocytopenia?

*Thrombocytopenia* means that you don't have enough platelets in your blood. When your platelets are low, you have a higher risk for bleeding.



**Normal blood**

**Thrombocytopenia**

*When someone has thrombocytopenia, their blood does not have enough platelets.*

#### What causes thrombocytopenia?

Thrombocytopenia can be caused by some types of cancer, viral infections, chemotherapies, other drugs, and drinking too much alcohol. You are considered to be *thrombocytopenic* if you have fewer than 100,000 platelets in a microliter of blood.

#### What should I do if I have thrombocytopenia?

- Avoid shaving with a razorblade. It is OK to use an electric razor.
- Avoid taking any medicines without asking your doctor. This includes medicines and herbal supplements you can buy without a prescription. It is *very* important to avoid aspirin and other drugs that contain aspirin.
- Avoid contact sports, heavy lifting, or exercise that makes you work hard.
- Avoid straining to have a bowel movement. Do not use rectal suppositories or enemas.

- Avoid cutting your fingernails. Use a file instead.
- Avoid blowing your nose forcefully.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Use a soft bristle toothbrush.
- Avoid anal sex.
- Women: Do not have sexual intercourse if you have had any vaginal bleeding. Wait at least 2 weeks after any bleeding before having sex.

### **What should I do if I start bleeding?**

- Apply pressure to the site. Hold pressure on the bleeding site for a full 5 minutes. Then check to see if the bleeding has stopped.
- If you have a nosebleed, pinch the bridge of your nose with your thumb and forefinger and sit with your head tilted slightly forward.

#### ***Go to the emergency room right away if:***

- Bleeding does not stop after you apply pressure for 10 minutes.
- You feel dizzy or lightheaded and are bleeding.
- You have any injury to your head, chest, or belly while your platelet count is low.

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

- Bleeding gums
- Nosebleeds
- Extra heavy menstrual flow
- Brown or red urine
- Black, tarry, or bloody stool
- Large bruises
- Blood in your vomit
- A fall or if you are injured

### **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

#### **To talk with a nurse:**

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call 206.598.2282 and select option 2.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call our Community Care Line at 206.598.3300.