

LOW WHITE COUNTS

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy can often cause a decrease in your white blood cell count, because they destroy both cancerous and normal cells that grow at a fast rate. Neutrophils (white blood cells) are the "infection fighting cells" in your body. A decrease in these cells results in a condition called neutropenia. It can make you more susceptible to developing an infection. It is essential that you do everything possible to prevent an infection during this time.

Some Signs of Infection

- A cough with production of yellow, green or grey sputum.
- A bad head cold.
- Chest discomfort or shortness of breath.
- Sore throat.
- Rectal soreness or pain (always cleanse your rectal area thoroughly after each bowel movement).
- Shaking chills.
- Fever of 100.5 degrees F (38 degrees C) or above.
- Any wound site that has redness, warmth or drainage, including intravenous catheter sites.
- Remember to check your temperature before calling the office. If you feel sick, you should check your temperature every 4 hours at home. If running a "low grade" temperature (98-100 degrees F.), recheck it in 2 hours before taking Tylenol.
- Irritability or restlessness.
- Mouth sores.
- New rash.

Notify Your Physician or Nurse

- If fever is 100.5 degrees F. or greater.
- If you have severe shaking or chills.
- Shortness of breath.
- Pain or burning upon urination, increased frequency, or blood in urine.

To Prevent Infection

- Wash hands frequently, especially after using the restroom.
- Maintain adequate food and fluid intake.
- Do not eat raw fruits or vegetables.
- Do not eat unpeeled vegetables or fruits (even if they are cooked).
- Avoid crowds and people with infections.
- Be especially careful and limit your contact with children as they may carry certain diseases.

- Do not change animal (cat) litter boxes or clean bird cages.
- Avoid gardening or contact with potting soil or fresh floral arrangements.
- Maintain good personal hygiene. Wash hands often. Bathe or shower daily.
- Follow mouth care instructions. Use a soft toothbrush and avoid mouthwashes with alcohol.
- Do not cut or push cuticles; use a cuticle cream instead.
- Use napkins, not tampons to reduce infection risk.
- Avoid vaginal douches, bubble bath and bath salts.
- Get adequate rest and exercise.
- Use a deodorant rather than an antiperspirant (antiperspirants block sweat glands and may promote infection).
- Consult your doctor before traveling.