

Thrombocytopenia

Platelets (Plts) help the blood in our bodies to clot and help prevent bleeding. A normal platelet count is 160,000 – 370,000.

Thrombocytopenia is when the platelet count is below 100,000.

Symptoms

Symptoms may not appear unless the platelet count is very low (less than 10,000 – 20,000). Symptoms may include:

- Bruising
- Prolonged bleeding, oozing gums
- Petechiae (little red spots under the skin - like freckles)
- Black tarry stools
- Blood in stool or rectal bleeding
- Blood in urine (cloudy to pink to red)
- Nose bleeds
- Coughing up or vomiting up blood
- Enlarged spleen
- Heavy menstrual flow

Activity and Health Guidelines

- Use a soft toothbrush and carefully floss or avoid flossing.
- Avoid using a blade when shaving. Use an electric razor.
- Blow your nose very gently.
- Use saline nasal spray or petroleum jelly to keep nostrils moist.
- Avoid constipation. Use stool softeners, eat a high fiber diet, and drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid aspirin and products that contain aspirin.
- Avoid non-steroidal inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These include, ibuprofen (Advil[®], Motrin[®]) and naproxen (Aleve[®]).

- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) for minor pain, as this does not affect how your platelets work.
- Avoid activities that carry risk of injury, such as, contact sports.
- Apply pressure to blood drawing sites for 5 minutes after blood is drawn.
- Apply pressure to cut or scrape for 5 minutes.
- For a nosebleed, pinch the soft part of your nose, just above the nostrils, for 10-15 minutes or until the bleeding stops. **Do not** tilt your head backwards.

Sex

Ask your doctor or nurse if sex is safe with your blood counts. If you can have sex, use a water-soluble lubricant (K-Y Jelly[®]) to help reduce trauma to the vaginal tissues.

Treatment Options

If your thrombocytopenia and symptoms are mild, you may not need treatment. If you need treatment, your provider may order one or more of these treatments based on the cause of your thrombocytopenia:

1. Platelet transfusions
2. Medicines that stop your body from destroying platelets
3. Medicines to help your body make more platelets
4. Surgery to remove spleen

When to Call

Call your provider if you have any symptoms of bleeding or if you are having prolonged bleeding.