



CANCER  
INFAMILY  
— build knowledge



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## BRUISING AND BLEEDING

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*This leaflet is about abnormal bleeding and bruising as result of chemotherapy. Ask your doctor if you are at risk of developing any of these problems from your treatment.*

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**PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLETS ARE NOT MEANT TO REPLACE THE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY YOUR DOCTOR.**

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# Risk of bruising and bleeding

## *Low platelet count in the blood (thrombocytopenia)*

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Chemotherapy can affect the bone marrow ability to produce platelets.

Platelets are blood components responsible for stopping bleeding; they glue damaged walls on blood vessels and stimulate clot formation.

An abnormally low number of platelets (thrombocytopenia) leads to high risk of bruises or bleedings (hemorrhages).

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### **Signs of thrombocytopenia include:**

- ✘ Bruising without apparent cause (e.g. without trauma).
- ✘ Small red dots under the skin or nails.
- ✘ Red or pink urine.
- ✘ Very dark or blood-colored stools (however dark feces can also be caused by iron supplements).
- ✘ Bleeding from the gums or nose.
- ✘ Severe headaches.
- ✘ Dizziness.
- ✘ Generalized weakness.
- ✘ Muscle and joint pain.



If you have any of these signs during or after chemo, immediately inform your physician. To avoid any problems, your doctor will check your blood platelet count regularly. If their number becomes dangerously low, you may need a platelet transfusion.

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## *If your platelet count is a little low, a few measures can help preventing problems:*

### **Food and Medication**

- × Never take any medicine without talking first with your doctor or nurse. This includes aspirin-containing products, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as Benuron®, and Ibuprofen®, vitamin E, and other over-the-counter medicines. In fact, some of these medicines affect platelets and increase bleeding.
- × Do not drink alcohol (beer, wine, or liquors) unless your doctor says that is OK. Alcohol is a blood thinning.
- × Have plenty of fluids and eat foods with fiber to reduce your chances of constipation.
- × Try to use a laxative or medication to soften stools if you feel like you are making an effort at expulsion. You do not want to bleed.

### **Clinical appointments**

- × Talk to your doctor or nurse before planning a visit to the dentist or having any minor surgical or aesthetic intervention to be sure that it is safe.

### **Hygiene**

- × Use an extra-soft toothbrush and, if you normally floss, discuss with your doctor if it is safe to keep doing it.
- × If you have a runny nose, blow it gently using a soft tissue.

### **Objects and Instruments**

- × Be careful to not injure yourself with sharp objects (scissors, needles, nail clippers, knives or other utensils).
- × Be cautious to not get burned while ironing or cooking. Use a glove-shaped handle instead of a regular one when using the oven.
- × Wear gloves if gardening, cooking or making repairs at home.
- × Use an electric razor instead of a razor blade to prevent skin cuts.
- × Avoid suppositories, rectal thermometers, or tampons.
- × Avoid tight clothing (e.g. belts, underwear or pants).



### Beauty treatments

- ✘ Do not get manicures, pedicures, waxing or tattoos without talking to your doctor or nurse.

### Posture and Physical Activity

- ✘ Avoid contact sports or other activities that could cause injury. When bending, keep your head above your heart.

### Sex Life

- ✘ During sex, use lubricant if necessary, avoid anal or oral sex, and any exaggerated friction.



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