

Neutropenia- Low white blood cell counts

Neutropenia is an abnormally low count of neutrophils which are the white blood cells that help your immune system fight off infections. The lower your neutrophil count, the more vulnerable you are to infectious diseases. If you have severe neutropenia which is a count of 500 cells or less, the bacteria normally present in your mouth and digestive tract can cause infections. This is diagnosed with a CBC blood test. Neutropenia is a serious side effect and can lead to infection. You should monitor your temperature every day if you are at risk for neutropenia. Your nurse or physician will let you know if you are at risk.

Important information for when you are Neutropenic:

Personal hygiene:

- Wash hands often with an antibacterial soap, especially before eating, after using the washroom, and shaking hands.
- Bathe daily and lightly pat the skin dry.
- Use moisturizer to prevent dry skin.
- Clean rectal area gently after bowel movements.
- Be careful with grooming and cutting nails. Do not tear or cut cuticles; use cuticle cream and remover. **ALWAYS** check with your doctor before getting manicures or pedicures.
- Use a clean electric razor instead of a disposable razor.
- Do not squeeze or scratch blemishes.
- Women: Use sanitary napkins, not tampons, to reduce infection risk.

Oral and Dental hygiene:

- Always use a soft tooth brush to prevent cuts in your mouth.
- Rinse mouth often and well. Avoid commercial mouthwashes (very drying), and products which contain alcohol.
- Clean dentures with fresh water.
- Discuss any required or scheduled dental work first with your physician before proceeding.
- Do not floss

General Information

- Avoid contact with animal stool or urine; stagnant water (e.g. vases, humidifiers).
- Avoid crowded public areas when your counts are low such as movie theaters and malls.
- Avoid people with colds, flu, open sores, or any type of infection.
- Avoid sunburn.
- Wear shoes-do not go barefoot.



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- Protect hands from cuts or burns.
- NO rectal thermometers or suppositories.
- Avoid contact with anyone who has recently received a live vaccine.
- Wear protective gloves when gardening.
- Keep skin moisturized to prevent dryness and cracking.

References:

<http://www.neutropenia.ca/about/living.html>

<http://www.ons.org/ClinicalResources/media/ons/docs/clinical/neutropenia/care-of-patients-with-neutropenia.pdf>



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