

Bone Marrow Suppression

The bone marrow is where the body makes white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets. White blood cells fight infection, red blood cells carry oxygen, and platelets help to clot blood and promote healing.

Chemotherapy drugs can affect the bone marrow and cause a decrease in the number of blood cells. These effects are usually temporary and manageable. Your doctor will test your blood frequently to detect early signs of bone marrow suppression. It is not unusual for your blood count to decrease after a treatment session. It will usually return to normal before your next session. If not, treatment may be postponed.

Low White Blood Count

A decreased number of white blood cells will make you more vulnerable to infections. Here are some things you can do to help:

1. Avoid crowds and people with colds and infections or contagious diseases such as chicken pox or flu.
2. Watch for signs and symptoms of infection: redness, swelling, soreness, cough, loose stools, burning when urinating and fever.
3. If you suspect an infection, take your temperature daily. Report a continuous temperature of 100.5 F to your doctor.
4. Shower or bathe daily, paying special attention to your genital areas.
5. Wash your hands before meals and when you use the bathroom.
6. Protect your skin-avoid prolonged sun exposure as well as cuts and scratches. Use lotion or hand creams to keep skin soft and moist.
7. Keep your mouth clean and moist. Good daily hygiene can help prevent mouth sores or infections. Use only a SOFT toothbrush to avoid injuring your mouth.
8. Don't cut or tear your nail cuticles. Use cuticle cream instead.
9. Do not squeeze or scratch pimples or boils.