

# Low White Blood Cell Count/Neutropenia

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Neutrophils are white blood cells (WBC). They help fight bacterial and fungal infections. Your doctor or nurse has told you that your neutrophil count is low. You must take the precautions described on this card to prevent infection until your neutrophil count returns to normal. You should also be aware of signs of infection to report to your doctor or nurse. Be sure to take your temperature orally as directed by your doctor or nurse.

## General Hygiene

- Shower or bathe daily. Wash carefully under your arms, in the rectal and genital areas, and in skin folds.
- Use soap that can kill germs. Look for the words “antimicrobial” or “bacteriostatic.” Dial® is one example, but there are many.
- Perform mouth care after each meal. Use an ultra-soft toothbrush or toothette and brush and rinse as directed by your doctor or nurse.
- Use antibacterial hand gels such as Purell®:
  - After shaking hands.
  - After direct contact with young children.

## Prevent Infection

- Avoid having visitors to your home who have colds or recent infections.
- Postpone any dental work or any invasive procedure that does not need to be done immediately. Speak with your doctor or nurse first.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if you can:
  - Use tampons.
  - Use suppositories.
  - Have enemas.
- Do not eat raw meats, raw fish, or raw eggs. Please ask your nurse or dietitian for literature on *The Low Microbial Diet* if you have not already received that information.
- Do not share eating or drinking utensils.
- Do not have a manicure, pedicure, waxing, or tattoo without the approval of your doctor or nurse. Do not shave your scalp or any other part of the body. Use caution when shaving your face. If possible, use an electric razor.
- Do not touch animal excreta (e.g., litter boxes, bird cages).
- Do not garden or handle soil compost.

## Notify your doctor or nurse if you develop any of the following signs of infection:

- Fever: temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher.
- Shaking chills.
- Unrelieved nausea and vomiting.
- Flushed face.
- Sweats.

- Cough.
- Diarrhea.
- Mouth sores.
- Headache.
- New onset of pain.
- Irritability.
- Pain or burning during urination.
- A general feeling of tiredness; especially if accompanied by flu-like symptoms.

If you have any problems or questions, speak with your:

Doctor \_\_\_\_\_(212) \_\_\_\_\_

Nurse \_\_\_\_\_(212) \_\_\_\_\_

After 5 p.m. and on weekends, call (212) 639-7900 and ask to speak to the doctor covering your service.



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