MANAGING CHEMOTHERAPY SIDE EFFECTS: LOW PLATELET COUNT

WHAT ARE PLATELETS?
Platelets are cells in your body that help blood to clot and stop any bleeding. The number of platelets that are circulating in your body can be decreased with some cancer therapy. Certain chemotherapy drugs and radiation therapy can lower the platelet count. There are also some cancers that involve the bone marrow, where platelets are made, that can cause a low platelet count.

WHAT DOES A LOW PLATELET COUNT MEAN?
There is a chance that you can bleed or bruise more easily without enough platelets.

WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE MY RISK OF BLEEDING WHEN MY PLATELET COUNT IS LOW?
- Avoid activities that may cause injury like contact sports, gardening, heavy housecleaning.
- Avoid forceful nose blowing or sneezing.
- Use electric razor for shaving, emery board for nail care.
- Use stool softeners such as Colace® and laxatives to prevent constipation and straining.
- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Do not use dental floss if your doctor or nurse tells you your platelet count is less than 50,000.
- Check with our doctor or nurse before taking over the counter medications, because some medications can affect how platelets work (examples: Aspirin, Motrin, Sineoff®).
- Do not have sexual intercourse if your doctor or nurse tells you your platelet count is less than 50,000.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR OR NURSE?
- Bruising more than usual, small red/purple spots or blotches on top of feet or lower legs.
- Cuts that ooze for long periods of time.
- Bleeding from gums or nose.
- Blood in the urine, stool or sputum.
- Headaches.
- Heavy menstrual periods.
- Vision changes.

DO NOT MAKE DENTAL APPOINTMENTS UNTIL SPEAKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE.