



NEBRASKA CANCER SPECIALISTS

the Physicians of Oncology Hematology West

Managing a Low White Blood Cell Count (Neutropenia)

Chemotherapy is usually given in cycles, with periods of rest that give your body time to help regain strength and replace healthy cells lost during treatment. However, neutropenia, a low number of certain white blood cells, is a common chemotherapy side effect of certain types of chemotherapy. In some cases neutropenia can disrupt your chemotherapy schedule.

A low white blood cell count means your immune system isn't as strong as it could be and that you are at increased risk for infection.

The fewer white blood cells you have and the longer you remain without enough, the more at risk you become for developing an infection, which can be potentially life-threatening.

As a result, your doctor may need to delay cancer treatment or reduce your chemotherapy dose until your low white blood cell count increases.

If you are neutropenic and you develop a fever or get an infection, you may need to be hospitalized until your infection is cured and your number of white blood cells returns to levels high enough to fight infections.

What things should I avoid while my white blood count is low?

- Ask your doctor before taking enemas or rectal suppositories.
- Avoid people who might have colds or the flu. Avoid crowds.
- Avoid dirty or stagnant water, like in flower vases, canals, or humidifiers.
- Avoid cleaning or changing pet litter.
- Do not eat raw eggs. They may contain harmful bacteria.
- Avoid people who have recently received live vaccines.
- Ask your doctor before getting vaccinations or immunizations.

If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, call if you develop rash, nausea, or diarrhea.

The best way to avoid illness when your white blood count is low is good HANDWASHING!

For more information feel free to visit the website chemocare.com