# Thrombocytopenia

When a blood tests shows your platelet count is low it is called thrombocytopenia. Platelets are important in forming blood clots. When you have a low count it may increase your risk for bleeding. This can cause abnormal bruising or even lead to very serious internal bleeding. This condition is caused by a wide variety of medical illnesses. Determining the cause is important to proper treatment. These illnesses include:

- Alcoholism or drug reactions (especially chemotherapy or radiation).
- Immune system disorders and infections (ITP, mononucleosis, HIV disease).
- Leukemia and other cancers.
- Vitamin B12 and folic acid deficiency.

If your platelet count is extremely low, hospital care may be necessary. This will allow transfusion of platelets and other medicines necessary to bring your count into a safer level. You should avoid any activities that risk injury or increase the risk of bleeding. Eat a good diet. Take your medicine and vitamin supplements as recommended. Avoid alcohol. Call your doctor to arrange for a follow-up exam within the next few days. Call right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fainting or extreme weakness or shortness of breath.
- Vomiting blood or passing very dark or bloody stools.
- Severe headache, chest or abdominal pain, or a high fever.

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 11/30/2009
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