

Moving oncology care
forward so that you
can look forward to
life's moments

*Patient information
Neutropenia*



Patient information neutropenia

1 What is Neutropenia / Leukopenia?

Having neutropenia means that you have a decrease in your white cell count and neutrophil count. This can cause bone marrow suppression which is a common side-effect of cancer treatment.

2 What is bone marrow suppression?

Bone marrow suppression is characterised by anaemia (decrease in red blood cells), leukopenia (decrease in white blood cells) and thrombocytopenia (decrease in the platelet count), all of which decrease your body's ability to fight off infections.

3 Management of Neutropenia

What to do

Go for regular blood check-ups

Avoid crowds and people with infection

Do not allow people with colds, flu, diarrhoea, or infections to visit your home

Maintain strict hand washing

Call a doctor immediately if any of the following symptoms appear



Aching, chills or shaking



Tenderness or redness of the central venous site



Excessive fatigue



Blisters on the lip, mouth sores or sore throat



Burning or painful urination



Skin sores or rash



Earache



Unusual or foul smelling vaginal discharge



Diarrhoea







Low blood pressure





4 What is neutropenic sepsis?

Neutropenic sepsis is a medical emergency and you should notify your doctor and get to a medical facility/emergency unit as soon as possible.

5 Symptoms of neutropenic sepsis

	Fever greater than 38°C
	Nervousness
	Confusion
	Low neutrophil count

6 Management of neutropenic sepsis

	You will be admitted to the ward for urgent management
	You will be placed in an isolation ward (if available)
	Should you have a temperature above 38°C, blood cultures will be sent to the laboratory and antibiotics will be administered through your port
	Your urine output will be measured

7 Tips for preventing infections

Avoid contact with germs



Wash your hands often, especially before eating and after using the bathroom



Avoid visiting crowded areas



Stay away from people who have recently had immunisations, e.g. vaccines for chicken pox, smallpox or flu



Wear protective gloves when gardening or cleaning up after animals and small children



Clean cuts and scrapes right away with warm water, soap and an antiseptic

Avoid cuts, scrapes and burns



Don't squeeze or scratch pimples



Clean your rectal area gently but thoroughly after a bowel movement



Ask your doctor or nurse for advice if the area becomes irritated or if you have haemorrhoids and check with the doctor before using enemas and suppositories



Don't cut, bite or tear the cuticles of your nails



Be careful not to cut or nick yourself when using scissors, needles or knives



Use an electronic shaver instead of a razor



Use an extra soft toothbrush that won't hurt your gums and talk to your doctor before using dental floss

Life Oncology

www.lifehealthcare.co.za



Life Oncology

Making life better