

# Neutropenic Precautions

## Bridgeport Hospital Patient Education

### Infection Control

#### Definition:

**Neutropenic** – having a low number of white blood cells. White blood cells fight bacteria and infection.

#### Explanation:

White blood cells are found in everyone's blood. White blood cells help your body fight bacteria and infection. Neutropenia is the medical term for blood that has few white blood cells. Cancer and cancer treatments (such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy) can destroy white blood cells, as can certain medications.

People who have neutropenia are “neutropenic.” When you become neutropenic (have fewer white blood cells in your body), your body has a harder time fighting off infections. You are at a higher risk of getting an infection than most healthy people.

Please use this information to identify the signs of infection and, more importantly, prevent it. If you do become ill, it is very important to call your doctor right away.

If you have been diagnosed with neutropenia, some possible signs of infection include the following:

- A temperature greater than 100.9 F
- A temperature greater than 100.4 F that lasts longer than one hour
- Feeling dizzy or weak
- Sores in your mouth
- A sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Stuffy nose and/or cough



## Neutropenic Precautions *(continued)*

- Increased shortness of breath
- Burning or pain when you urinate
- Any redness, swelling or drainage at an incision site or wound

### **What you can do to help avoid getting an infection:**

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
- Take your temperature when you have chills or are not feeling well
- Take a bath or shower daily
- Do not get cuts, punctures or scratches on your skin
- Rinse your mouth with warm salt water
- Use a soft toothbrush
- Prevent constipation
- Wipe front to back after a bowel movement
- Drink lots of fluids (water, juice, etc.) to prevent dehydration
- Use sanitary napkins (pads) rather than tampons
- Avoid people who have colds or the flu
- Do not visit crowded areas such as malls or movie theaters
- Avoid anyone who has received a live vaccination (shot) within the last three weeks
- Maintain a well-balanced diet and eat healthy foods, but avoid raw or uncooked foods, including raw vegetables and fruits
- Speak with your doctor before having any dental work done
- Do not have fresh flowers in your hospital room or house
- Limit exposure to pet feces (e.g., litter box)
- Do only as much activity as you can tolerate
- Schedule a follow-up appointment at your doctor's office or in the hospital outpatient clinic

For more information, or if you have any questions, please call or speak with your doctor or nurse.

