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Low White Blood Cell Count

White blood cells fight infection. A low white blood cell count puts you at a risk for developing an infection. To boost the WBC, we may prescribe G-CSF (Neupogen® or Neulasta®) after your next cycle of chemotherapy. This drug is given by injection, usually at home by the patient or a family member, on specific days after a chemotherapy treatment. If you are to receive this drug, we will instruct you on how to administer it.

Self-Care Measures to prevent infection:

- Practice good hygiene, e.g., wash your hands after using the toilet.
- Protect your hands from cuts and burns.
- Wear gloves when doing dishes, cooking, or gardening.
- Use moisturizer on your skin to avoid cracks.
- Monitor your temperature every four hours if you feel feverish. This should be done by mouth, since using a rectal thermometer can increase your chances of infection.
- If you have a cut, clean it with soap and water immediately and watch for signs of infection (redness, swelling, discharge from the wound). If signs of infection develop, contact the nurse.

Things to Avoid:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®), it may mask fever and infection.
- People with infectious diseases (e.g., chickenpox, tuberculosis, measles), especially children, who are likely to be exposed to them
- Crowded areas (e.g., shopping malls, auditoriums, theaters); this is especially important during the period after treatment when your counts are at their lowest.

Contact your physician or nurse if you have:

- Any signs of infection (i.e., cough, sore throat, pain or burning with urination, fever, redness, swelling, pus from a wound or your catheter site).
- Oral temperature above 100.5° F
- Chills, teeth-chattering with or without fever