Neutrophilic Precautions: Home Care Information

Neutrophils are White Blood Cells (WBC) and are the first line of defense against an infection. Neutropenia is a decreased number of circulating neutrophils otherwise known as the absolute neutrophil count (ANC). A patient is considered neutropenic if the ANC is less than 1000. The risk of infection is increased with neutropenia. Neutropenia can be caused by suppression of bone marrow production by chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Neutropenia occurs usually 7-14 days after chemotherapy treatment.

Absolute Neutrophil Count (ANC)-Classification of neutropenia

- MILD 1500-1900
- MODERATE 1000-1400
- MODERATE TO SEVERE 500-900
- SEVERE <500

Certain precautions are observed to reduce risk of getting an infection.

- Monitor for signs and symptoms of an infection
- Practice good hygiene
- Seek medical attention immediately for signs of infection

If you have these symptoms call the Oncology Clinic 706-721-4929 tell the physician or nurse practitioner

Fever > 100.5°. It is the main indicator of infection

- Cough, rapid breathing, shortness of breath
- Runny nose, nasal congestion, or excess mucous
- Ear ache
- Redness, tearing, or draining from eyes
- Sore throat, soreness, difficulty swallowing, swelling of the mouth
- Headache and inability to bend neck forward
- Blisters, rash, ulcers, or tenderness of the skin
- Flushed appearance of the skin or excessive sweating
- Chest or abdominal pain
- Loose, watery stools
- Abdominal pain
- Ulceration or pain around the rectum
- Frequent or painful urination, blood in the urine, or lower back pain
- Pain, redness, drainage, or swelling at the site of your central line or an injury site
- Flu like symptoms, chills, dizziness, or weakness
- Mental confusion or difficulty waking up
Things to avoid when you are neutropenic:
- No fresh fruits and vegetables during hospitalization or eating out
- Unpasteurized foods (examples are milk, orange juice, cheese, and honey),
- Raw or undercooked meats or eggs
- Do not eat out of date food or foods left at room temperature >2 hours
- Avoid acidic and abrasive foods
- Do not eat from a salad bar
- Do not share food utensils.
- Avoid flowers: cut or dried and live plants. *Wash hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap after children play outdoors.
- Avoid crowds or exposure to people with colds or contagious illnesses.
- Do not share towels or personal items
- Do not receive live virus vaccines and avoid exposure to people who have received live virus vaccines in the last 30 days. The injectable flu vaccines are given to Oncology patients every year and families are encouraged to receive them. The nasal spray vaccine is not permitted.
- Limit contact with pets (litter boxes, bird cages, fish and reptile tanks)
- Do not swim in ponds, lakes, and rivers
- Do not use hot tubs and or a Jacuzzi
- Wear a mask in construction areas
- Avoid tobacco products
- Regular dental care/cleanings are recommended only when patient is not neutropenic.
- Do not get a body piercing or tattoo
- Avoid tampons during periods of neutropenia
- Do not suppress fever until it has been evaluated by a physician

General Hygiene
- Wash hands before you eat, after going to the bathroom, and always before handling a central line
- Patient with neutropenia should have daily showers. Cover central line with a waterproof dressing. Avoid tub baths
- Your house and room should be kept clean
- Use a soft toothbrush for mouth care after meals and at bedtime. Examine mouth daily
- Perform good perineal care with urination and bowel movements. Girls wipe from front to back
- Protect your skin form cuts and burns
- No rectal suppositories, rectal temperatures, or enemas. Report pain, burning or itching in the rectal area, painful bowel movements, or hemorrhoids. Avoid constipation
- Do not receive manicure, pedicure, or have nail tips applied during neutropenic phases
- Wear a mask as needed
- Wear shoes in the hospital, at home, and outside
- Properly clean utensils and dishes
Remember

- Fever may be the first sign of an infection. A temperature of 100.5° F or more is considered a fever
- The neutropenic patient has a reduced ability to fight infection
- Call the physician or nurse practitioner on call immediately 706-721-4929
- A delay in treatment may cause serious consequences
- An infection during neutropenia is considered potentially life threatening
- An infection can spread quickly, enter the blood stream, and quickly lead to septic shock
- IV antibiotic therapy must be started immediately
- Failure to observe precautions may result in death