

Part of the IMF Patient Education Tools Series

Managing Myelosuppression From Novel Agents for Multiple Myeloma

Patient Education Sheet: Managing Myelosuppression From Novel Agents for Multiple Myeloma

KEY POINTS

Novel therapies used to treat multiple myeloma include thalidomide, lenalidomide, and bortezomib. The drugs can cause myelosuppression, which is a decrease in bone marrow activity, resulting in fewer red blood cells (anemia), white blood cells (neutropenia), and platelets (thrombocytopenia). The risk of side effects varies with each medication. Managing the side effects can reduce your discomfort, prevent serious complications, and allow you to receive the best treatment for your myeloma. Your healthcare provider may change your dose or schedule of medication to help manage your symptoms. Do not stop or adjust medications without discussing it with your healthcare provider.

ANEMIA

Anemia is a decrease in red blood cells, or hemoglobin, which carry oxygen in the blood. It may result from myeloma treatment, decreased kidney function, myeloma disease, or other medications.

Symptoms of anemia can include fatigue, low energy level, difficulty with normal daily activities, shortness of breath with activity, and chest pain with activity.

If you experience symptoms of anemia, contact your healthcare provider.

Try not to use too much energy in daily activities.

Your healthcare provider may prescribe a red blood cell supplement such as iron, erythropoietin, or a red blood cell transfusion. If necessary, changes may be made in medications you are taking.

NEUTROPENIA

Neutropenia is a decrease in white blood cells, which protect against infection. It may result from myeloma treatment, myeloma disease, or other medications.

Note. For more information, please contact the International Myeloma Foundation (1-800-452-CURE; www.myeloma.org). The foundation offers the Myeloma Manager™ Personal Care Assistant™ computer program to help patients and healthcare providers keep track of information and treatments. Visit <http://manager.myeloma.org> to download the free software.

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The greatest concern with neutropenia is infection. Symptoms can include fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, shaking chills, dizziness, fainting, redness at a wound site, difficulty breathing, cough, or sinus congestion.

If you experience fever or symptoms of infection, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

To reduce your risk of infection, wash your hands carefully and often, avoid crowds, and take antibiotics as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

Your healthcare provider will check your blood counts regularly based on your plan of care and may prescribe antibiotics to prevent infection and growth factors to stimulate white blood cell growth. If necessary, changes may be made to medications you are taking.

THROMBOCYTOPENIA

Thrombocytopenia is a decrease in platelets that protect against bleeding. It may result from myeloma treatment, myeloma disease, or other medications. It may be associated more frequently with lenalidomide and bortezomib.

Symptoms of thrombocytopenia may include bruising, pink urine, nosebleeds, small red or purple spots on the body (petechiae), and bleeding that does not stop with pressure.

If you experience signs or symptoms of a low platelet count, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

To reduce your risk of bruising or bleeding, avoid taking aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen. Avoid activities that can cause bruising or bleeding, such as contact sports, anal sex, and heavy lifting. Participate in gentle exercise only.

Your healthcare provider will monitor blood counts regularly based on your plan of care and may prescribe a platelet transfusion. If necessary, changes may be made in medications you are taking.



INTERNATIONAL MYELOMA FOUNDATION
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