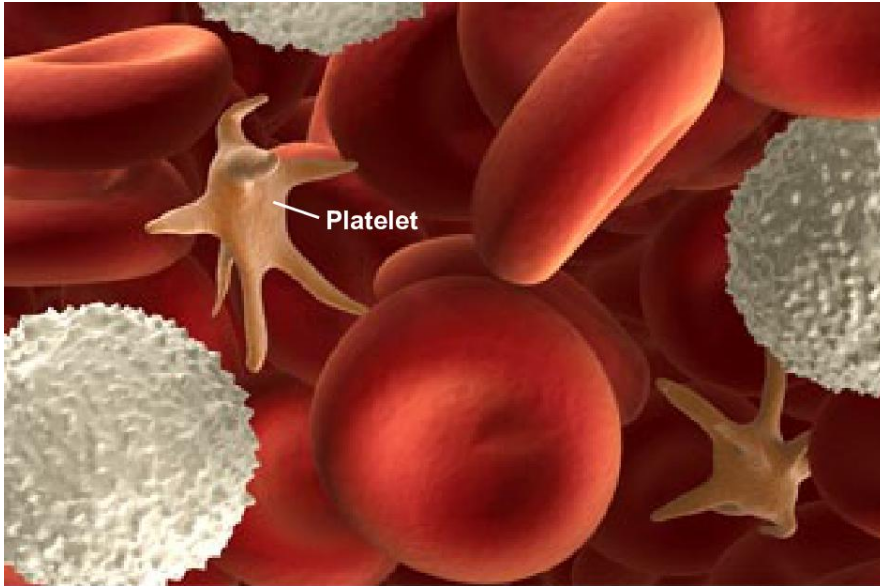




Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)



Overview

This condition is an abnormally low number of platelet cells in your blood. Platelets are tiny cells that help your blood clot to stop bleeding. If your platelets are destroyed, or if your body can't produce enough new cells to meet your needs, you can develop a shortage. You can be at risk for excessive bleeding, including internal bleeding. This is a medical emergency.

Causes

A low platelet level can have several causes. It can develop during pregnancy. It can result from leukemia and from chemotherapy drugs. It can develop because of autoimmune diseases, such as HIV, or other viral or bacterial infections. It is linked to conditions that cause an enlarged spleen. It can also be caused by heavy alcohol consumption, and by exposure to toxic chemicals.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include excessive bruising. You may develop a rash of tiny spots on your skin, especially on your lower legs. Minor cuts may bleed for a long time. You may bleed from the gums or the nose. You may see blood in your urine or stool. And women may experience unusually heavy menstrual flows.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the severity of the condition. Minor cases may not need treatment, and may resolve on their own. But if your condition is severe, you may need treatment for an underlying condition. You may need blood transfusions. And you may benefit from medications that support your platelets.

