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Low Red Blood Cell Count

Anemia (low red blood cell count) decreases the body's ability to carry oxygen and iron. It can occur 7-14 days after each chemotherapy treatment, but is more likely to occur after many months of treatment. Your doctor may prescribe red blood cell stimulator (Procrit or Aranesp) to minimize this side effect. This drug is given by injection once per week while you are receiving chemotherapy treatment. Before receiving this drug the hemoglobin (Hgb) lab test must be <11 or hematocrit $<33\%$.

Self-Care Measures:

- Eat lean meat, chicken, dried apricots, raisins, split-peas, and lima beans to increase dietary iron.
- Limit your activities to conserve energy.
- Perform activities at high energy times.
- Change positions slowly, e.g., from sitting to standing.
- Take iron supplements if prescribed.

Things to Avoid:

- Strenuous activities (shoveling, moving furniture)
- High-altitude environments (may cause extreme dizziness)

Contact the clinic if you have:

- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Severe fatigue (feeling very weak and tired).
- Shortness of breath.
- Heart palpitations (feeling as if your heart is pounding or beating very fast)