

Thrombocytosis

Introduction

Thrombocytosis is when you have too many platelets (*thrombocytes*) in your blood. Platelets are tiny elements in the blood that stick together and form a clot (*thrombus*). Platelets help your body stop bleeding. Some conditions that cause inflammation, such as cancer, may trigger your body to make more platelets than normal.

There are two types of thrombocytosis. Primary or essential thrombocytosis happens when abnormal cells in the bone marrow make too many platelets. Reactive thrombocytosis happens when a secondary condition like infection or trauma causes too many platelets.

What are the causes?

The exact cause of primary thrombocytosis is not known. Reactive thrombocytosis may be caused by:

- Having your spleen surgically removed (*splenectomy*).
- Injury or trauma.
- Certain infections.
- Very bad bleeding.
- Low red blood cell count from not having enough iron (*iron deficiency anemia*).
- Having a disease that destroys your red blood cells (*hemolytic anemia*).
- Not having enough vitamin B12.
- Inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.
- Cancer, especially lymphoma, breast, stomach, and ovarian cancers.
- Alcohol abuse.
- Certain medicines.

What are the signs or symptoms?

Sometimes you may not have any symptoms. It can also be hard to tell the difference between symptoms of reactive thrombocytosis and symptoms of the underlying condition. If you have symptoms, they may include:

- Weakness.
- Headache.
- Dizziness or confusion.
- Chest pain or shortness of breath.
- Tingling or burning in your hands or feet.
- Blood clots.
- Bleeding.

How is this diagnosed?

This condition may be diagnosed by:

- A physical exam, medical history, and your symptoms.
- Blood tests.
- A procedure to collect a sample of your bone marrow (*bone marrow aspiration*).

How is this treated?

You may not need treatment for primary thrombocytosis. If you have symptoms, then you may need to take aspirin or other medicines to prevent blood clots. You may also need a procedure to lower your platelet count. This procedure is called plateletpheresis and uses an IV and tube to remove your blood.

Treatment for reactive thrombocytosis depends on the cause. Your platelet count may return to normal after treating the cause. If your platelet count is very high, you may have to take medicines to prevent blood clots.

Follow these instructions at home:

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your health care provider.
- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco, such as cigarettes and e-cigarettes. If you need help quitting, ask your health care provider.
- Ask your health care provider about managing or preventing high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. These conditions can make thrombocytosis worse.

- Tell all health care providers including dentists about any medicines you are taking to prevent blood clots.
- Avoid taking ibuprofen medicines. These medicines can thin your blood or interact with your other medicines.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your health care provider. This is important.

Contact a health care provider if:

- You have severe pain, and medicines do not help.
- You have problems taking your medicines to prevent blood clots.
- You have a headache that you cannot control.
- You faint.

Get help right away if:

- You have bleeding or blood clots.
- You have unusual bruising on your body.
- You have bloody or tarry stools.
- You have pink or bloody urine.
- If you are a woman, your periods are heavier than normal.
- You have bleeding gums and nosebleeds.
- You suddenly develop a headache, weakness, or drooping in your face.
- You suddenly cannot speak or understand speech.
- You have chest pain.
- You have trouble breathing.

Summary

- Thrombocytosis is when you have too many platelets in your blood.
- Ask your health care provider about managing or preventing high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. These conditions can make thrombocytosis worse.
- Treatment can vary and may include medicines to prevent blood clots.