

Understanding Your Complete Blood Count (CBC)

Why do we monitor your CBC?

It is important to monitor your CBC because chemotherapy can reduce the number of blood cells in your body. The reduction increases your risk for infection, FATIGUE, and bleeding. If your CBC is abnormal, it may delay your chemotherapy treatment. Discuss with your nurse or doctor possible solutions if your CBC is low.

The main components of your CBC and normal values:

Name	Explanation	Normal Ranges*
Hemoglobin (Hgb, Hb)	The protein in red blood cells that contain iron and carries oxygen throughout the body. If the Hb count is too low, a person may be anemic and may feel tired and FATIGUED.	13.5-18 g/dl
Hematocrit (HCT)	The percentage of red blood cells in the bloodstream. When the HCT is low a person has anemia.	41-53%
White Blood Cells (WBC's)	Cells of the immune system that protect the body from infections from viruses and bacteria. Without enough white blood cells, the body cannot fight infection and disease.	4-10 K/dl
Absolute Neutrophil Count (ANC)	The number of neutrophils in your blood. Neutrophils, a type of WBC, helps the body to fight infection. If the ANC falls below normal, a person has neutropenia. The risk increases when the ANC is below 1000. The greatest risk occurs when the ANC falls below 500.	1.8-7.0 K/dl
Platelets	Cells that help stop bleeding by working with other blood factors to form a clot.	150-400 K/dl

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

- How often do I need to get my CBC checked?
- What are my ANC and Hb results?
- What do I need to do if my ANC or Hb are abnormally low?

* Normal ranges vary from hospital to hospital.
 The ranges included are for University Hospital.