Understanding Your CBC

Your healthcare team will be drawing blood from time to time at your office visits. One of the most common tests we perform on your blood is a Complete Blood Count (CBC.) The important values on the CBC are explained below.

White Blood Cells (WBC): These cells are produced in the bone marrow and are a part of the body's immune system, helping to fight infection. A normal WBC count varies depending on the lab. Most normal WBC counts range from 4,000-12,000 or 4.0-12.0 in adults.

Neutrophils: A type of WBC. It is the most important WBC in fighting infection, so you are at higher risk of infection when this number is below 1,000 or 1.0. A normal count (sometimes called ANC) is 1,500-8,000. A count below 1,000 is called neutropenia.
When this count is low check your temperature daily or if you feel warm. Notify your healthcare team if you have a temperature greater than 100.5, shaking chills, a sore throat, or a sore/wound that doesn't heal.

Hemoglobin: The part of a red blood cell that is responsible for carrying oxygen to the tissues. Normal levels for an adult female are 12-16 and 13.5-17.5 for an adult male.
Low hemoglobin can make you feel tired. If you notice any difficulty breathing or pain in your chest, you should notify your healthcare team right away. If your hemoglobin count becomes too low or you experience breathing difficulties or chest pressure, you may need a blood transfusion.

Platelets: A blood cell that is involved in blood clotting. When this count is below 50,000, you are at higher risk of bleeding. The risk of bleeding increases as the count becomes lower. A normal count is 140,000-440,000 in an adult. Let your healthcare team know if you have any bleeding, including nose bleeds, or bleeding gums. If your platelet count becomes too low or you have bleeding, you may need to receive a platelet transfusion.

You will notice many other lab values on the CBC report. The labs listed here are the important values that your medical oncology care team will be monitoring.