You may experience unusual or abnormal bleeding or bruising at some point during your treatment. Bleeding can be internal, where you can’t see it, or external (like from a cut), where you can see it. If notice any unusual bleeding or bruising, it is important to tell your care team. This handout explains what causes bleeding, when to contact your care team, and what you can do at home.

What causes bleeding?

Bleeding may be caused by:

• Cancer and its treatments
• Low platelet count (thrombocytopenia) due to chemotherapy or other factors
• Blood disorders, such as problems with clotting
• Gastro-intestinal ulcers
• Blood thinners and other medications or supplements
• Injuries and wounds

When to contact your care team

Call 911 now if you experience:

• Uncontrolled, constant bleeding
• Unconsciousness

Call your care team if you experience:

• New or increased bleeding or bruising
• Blood in your vomit (could be red or look like coffee grounds)
• Blood in your stool (could be bright red or black)
• Blood or blood clots in your urine
• Nosebleed that won’t stop after 30 minutes
• Many, tiny, red or purple spots on your skin or in your mouth (the size of a pinpoint)
• A fall, with or without injury
• People who menstruate: Changing your pad more than you normally do or using more than one pad in an hour. Do not use tampons.

Note: Apply pressure to the site that’s bleeding if you need to go somewhere for treatment while bleeding. Avoid any unnecessary movement.
What you can do at home

Prevent bleeding

- **Do not take over-the-counter medications or supplements** without first talking to your care team. Certain medications can increase your risk of bleeding. Examples include aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen (Aleve®), Alka-Seltzer®, or cold medications that contain these drugs. This is not a full list of medications that can increase your risk of bleeding.

- If you take medication for high blood pressure, take it as prescribed; high blood pressure can trigger bleeding.

- If you are told your platelet count is low:
  - Use a soft bristle toothbrush.
  - Do not use razorblades because you may cut yourself; use an electric razor instead.
  - Be extra careful to avoid falls.
  - Do not exercise intensely; follow activity guidelines from your physical therapist or care team.
  - Do not get a deep massage.
  - Do not blow your nose hard or scratch the inside of your nose.
  - Use pads if you are menstruating. Do not use tampons.
  - Do not have sexual intercourse if you have had breakthrough bleeding (any vaginal bleeding) within 2 weeks.
  - Do not have anal sex until your platelets are stable.
  - Do not put anything in your rectum, including suppositories, enemas, or thermometers.

Control bleeding if it starts

- Apply pressure to your bleeding site. For example, for a nosebleed: Press your nostrils together firmly with your fingers or wrap ice in a soft cloth and press it firmly against your nostrils.

- Hold pressure on bleeding site for 5 minutes before checking to see if the bleeding has stopped.

- Try to stay calm, if you can. Breathing exercises, such as inhaling for 4 counts and exhaling for 4 counts (repeatedly) can help.