



ITP Patient Information Leaflet

on immune thrombocytopenia

This leaflet can be downloaded from: www.itpsupport.org.uk/docs/itppatientleaflet.pdf

WHAT IS ITP?

Immune thrombocytopenia (previously known as idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura) is a rare bleeding disorder in which the body's immune system destroys platelets in the blood. Platelets act as an initial plug to stop blood leakage before the rest of the blood clotting process begins.

A normal platelet count is between 100 and 400. With ITP the platelet count may go below 5. Symptoms vary and commonly include bruising, nose bleeds, black mouth blisters, petechiae (rash of tiny spots), fatigue, and heavy periods in women. Rarely, symptoms can include internal bleeding.

ITP can affect anyone at any age. It is not contagious and often arises without known cause. In adults it can become a chronic (long term) condition but children more often have acute (short term) ITP and make a recovery within weeks or months. Women can develop ITP during pregnancy but their platelet count usually returns to normal after childbirth.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Only a small proportion of patients will require treatment, which may be steroid tablets called prednisolone. The aim is to maintain the platelet count at a level which enables the patient to lead a normal life without troublesome symptoms, but it may not be possible to achieve this without side effects from the treatment. Patients who do not have severe symptoms, (particularly children) may be managed by a 'watch and wait' approach in which no treatment is given but their progress is monitored through regular check-ups.

BUT HELP IS AT HAND...

Founded in 1995, the ITP Support Association is run primarily by dedicated volunteers who either have ITP themselves or have a close relative with the condition. It provides information and support through its numerous publications, quarterly journal *The Platelet*, annual patient conventions and social network platforms. Membership is just £10 per annum, and we welcome donations to continue our work and fund research.

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