

# Thrombocytopenia

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## Overview

Thrombocytopenia refers to an abnormally low blood-concentration of platelets, which are blood cells that promote blood clotting. When the concentration of platelets becomes too low, spontaneous bruising and bleeding may occur.

Abnormally low platelet numbers in blood can be caused by a variety of disease processes. These include failure to produce new platelets in the bone marrow, premature destruction of circulating platelets often by the body's own immune system, storing of platelets in organs, and consumption of platelets at a rate that exceeds production in the bone marrow.

Dogs of any gender, age and breed can suffer from thrombocytopenia.

## Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Thrombocytopenia is generally diagnosed by physical examination and history and a complete blood count with manual platelet count. Once a low platelet count has been confirmed, additional tests are performed to try to determine the underlying cause of the low platelet count. Tests may include blood chemistry, urinalysis, chest and abdominal x-rays, bone marrow biopsy or aspiration, blood clotting tests and specialized infectious disease tests.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. The underlying cause of the thrombocytopenia may be treated with corticosteroids or antibiotics. In some cases, surgery may be required to treat the cause of the low platelet count. Some dogs may benefit from vincristine, a drug that can help release platelets from the bone marrow. This medication is only given to those animals that have platelets in their bone marrow. Rarely, platelet transfusions may be given to temporarily increase the platelet count. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

## What to Watch for\*:

- Small red spots or dots on the gums or the skin
- Unexplained bruises on the skin
- Nose bleeds (epistaxis)
- Bloody urine

- Bloody stool

*\*Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*