

What is Immune Thrombocytopenia?

Chronic ITP affects women two to three times more often than men.

1 Introduction

Immune thrombocytopenia (ITP) is a rare blood disease in which the blood does not clot as it should due to a low platelet count. ITP is classified as “newly diagnosed” when it has been present for less than 3 months, “persistent” when present for 3-12 months, and “chronic” when present for longer than one year. Newly diagnosed ITP is mostly present in children and often goes away on its own, while those with chronic ITP may need treatment for the rest of their lives.

2 Causes

ITP is usually caused by the body mistakenly attacking and destroying platelets. This is called primary ITP and accounts for about 80% of all cases. With secondary ITP, underlying conditions like chronic infections, blood cancers or autoimmune disorders can affect platelet levels.

3 Symptoms

ITP may not cause any symptoms initially. However, when they do appear, most symptoms are related to increased bleeding due to low platelet counts. Some symptoms include:

- Easy bruising
- Petechiae: small, flat red spots under the skin caused by blood leaking from blood vessels
- Purpura: bleeding in the skin that can cause red, purple or brownish-yellow spots
- Fatigue
- Heavy menstrual periods
- Blood in the vomit, urine or stool
- Bleeding from the gums or nose

4 Treatments

Treatment for ITP depends on the platelet count and whether any symptoms are present. The two most common forms of immediate treatment are steroids and IVGG. If ITP persists, other treatment options such as platelet transfusion, splenectomy, or certain lifestyle changes may be recommended.

Did you know?

Each year, about 4 in 100,000 children and 3 in 100,000 adults in the United States are diagnosed with ITP.

For more information on immune thrombocytopenia and supportive resources, please visit nhlbi.nih.gov.

References:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/idiopathic-thrombocytopenic-purpura>

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