Introduction
This patient information sheet has been prepared to explain white cell reduction. If you have any questions please ask your doctor or nurse.

What are white cells?
White cells are a type of blood cell produced in your bone marrow. White blood cells help the body to fight infection.

There are different types of white cells and they all have specific functions. Some white cells attack bacteria which infect the body, while others remember past infections such as chicken pox and provide immunity.

What is a white cell reduction?
White cell reduction involves the separation and removal of white cells from your blood stream.

Why do I need a white cell reduction?
Your body is producing too many white cells. This is called ‘leukocytosis’. The cause of leukocytosis may be due to an underlying bone marrow disease. Having too many white cells can cause symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, vision disturbances and increased fatigue. Having a white cell reduction decreases the number of white cells in your blood stream quickly and safely.

How often will I need a white cell reduction?
The number of white cell reduction procedures required will depend on the disease being treated and your response to the treatment. Your doctor will discuss with you the number of procedures required and how often.

How is a white cell reduction performed?
A registered nurse will perform the white cell reduction. You will be connected to a machine called a blood cell separator or apheresis machine. The blood cell separator uses sterile tubing, which is used only once and then discarded.

The registered nurse will stay with you throughout the white cell reduction procedure.

The nurse will insert a drip into each of your arms. Blood is drawn from one arm into the machine. The machine separates the white cells from the rest of your blood. The white cells are collected by the machine and discarded by the nurse at the end of the procedure. The rest of your blood is returned to you via the drip in your other arm. During the procedure, the machine is continuously drawing, separating and returning your blood.

This information is intended as a guideline only and in no way replaces consultation with a Health Professional.
As each person is an individual, responses to treatment may vary. If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor.
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What if my veins are not good enough for a white cell reduction?

Sometimes it is not possible to obtain a good flow of blood from the veins in the arms. In this case other options for gaining access to your blood are available. If needed, your nurse and doctor will discuss these options with you.

How long will the white cell reduction take?

A white cell reduction takes three (3) to four (4) hours to complete. It is important to wear comfortable clothing.

You should eat and drink as normal before, during and after your white cell reduction. You may wish to read a book, watch TV or a DVD throughout the procedure. Visitors are welcome, but should be limited to one or two people.

Is having a white cell reduction painful?

Having a white cell reduction does not hurt. The insertion of the drips into your arms may cause some initial discomfort. This discomfort usually passes after a few minutes.

It is important to remember that the drips in your arms remain in place throughout the procedure and your range of movement will be restricted.

Are there any side effects or problems that could occur?

Your doctor is responsible for the procedure and you will be seen by a doctor on the day of your white cell reduction. A registered nurse will monitor you throughout the procedure and will assist you if you experience any difficulties.

Possible side effects include the following:

- Although only a small amount of your blood is in the machine at any time, the changes in blood volume may lead to a feeling of light headedness or dizziness. You should report these changes immediately to your nurse. During the procedure, your nurse will monitor your pulse and blood pressure and adjust the machine settings as necessary.

- Your blood naturally wants to clot when it leaves the body (e.g. a scab forms when you cut yourself). An anticoagulant is used to prevent clots forming while your blood is in the machine. The anticoagulant may cause a tingling sensation around your lips and/or eyes.

  Please inform your nurse immediately if you experience these side effects. These symptoms only occur while you are attached to the machine and are generally easily managed.

- You may feel tired during the procedure and for a few days after a white cell reduction.

How will I feel after a white cell reduction?

You may feel tired or lethargic after the procedure. We ask that you organise a relative or friend to drive you home afterwards. It is unlikely you will experience any problems following the procedure. However, if you feel unwell or experience any side effects you should contact your doctor or the day hospital immediately.
Icon Cancer Care contact numbers

Brisbane (South Brisbane, Wesley and Chermside)

- The majority of Specialists can be contacted during normal clinic hours (Monday - Friday 8:00am - 6:00pm) on (07) 3737 4500.

- Several Specialists have different 'after hours' arrangements in place. The majority of Specialists can be contacted on 1300 4266 00. Please ask the 'after hours' service provider for your Specialist by name and they will advise how your call will be managed.

Southport

- The majority of Specialists can be contacted during normal clinic hours (Monday - Friday 8:00am - 4:30pm) on (07) 5657 6400

- Several Specialists have different 'after hours' arrangements in place. The majority of Specialists can be contacted on 1300 4266 00. Please ask the 'after hours' service provider for your Specialist by name and they will advise how your call will be managed.

Townsville

- During Business Hours (07) 4795 7100 and ask for the day hospital.
- After Business Hours phone (07) 4795 7100 and ask for the doctor on call.

Adelaide

- During Business hours from 8.00am to 5.30pm phone (08) 8292 2220.
- After Business Hours (after 5.30pm), phone 0407 118 597 to speak with the doctor on call.
- Dr Nath’s patients contact 0449 028 220.

In the event of an emergency please call 000.