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Polycythemia Vera

Patient name: _____ Admission: _____

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- I. **The client/caregiver can define polycythemia vera.**
 - A. It is an abnormal increase in blood cells (white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets).
 - B. It happens when the bone marrow overproduces all three blood cells. The blood will thicken and can form clots.
 - C. It occurs more often in men than women. Most patients with this disorder are over 40 years old.
 - D. The cause is unknown.

- II. **The client/caregiver can list symptoms of polycythemia vera.**
 - A. Symptoms are due to increased blood viscosity (thickness) and clotting.
 - Headache
 - Dizziness
 - Itchiness, especially after a warm bath
 - Fullness in left upper abdomen
 - Shortness of breath
 - Breathing difficulty when lying down
 - Symptoms of phlebitis (inflammation from blood clot)
 - Vision abnormalities
 - Skin discoloration (red or bluish)
 - Fatigue

- III. **The client/caregiver can list possible complications of polycythemia vera.**
 - A. Leukemia
 - B. Heart failure
 - C. Gastric bleeding or peptic ulcer disease
 - D. Gout
 - E. Blood clots which increase risk of strokes and heart attacks

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- IV. **The client/caregiver can list measures to manage this disease.**
 - A. This disease can be treated but not cured.
 - B. Measures to prevent complications are as follows:
 1. Do moderate exercise such as walking.
 2. Do leg and ankle stretching exercises.
 3. Use cooler water and gentle soap for bathing.
 4. Dry skin carefully and use moisturizing lotion.
 5. Avoid exposure of your hands and feet to extremes in temperature.
 6. Avoid hot tubs, tanning salons, and so forth.
 7. Drink plenty of liquids.
 8. Check your feet regularly, and report any open areas to physician.

RESOURCES

Support groups
 National Library of Medicine MedlinePlus
www.medlineplus.gov
 National Institutes of Health
www.nlm.nih.gov/

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