

# MULTIPLE MYELOMA

(Plasma Cell Myeloma)

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## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A malignancy beginning in the plasma cells of the bone marrow. Plasma cells normally produce antibodies to help destroy germs and protect against infection. With myeloma, this function becomes impaired, and the body cannot deal effectively with infection. It can affect the bone marrow of all bones but is most common in the thigh, back, pelvis or upper arms. It is most common in men between ages 50 and 70. A recent report has found a virus associated with multiple myeloma.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Pain in the affected bone. The pain is severe, boring and deep. If the bone collapses, pain spreads to other parts of the body.
- Weight loss.
- Symptoms of anemia, such as weakness, paleness, tiredness and breathlessness.

### CAUSES

Unknown. The bone pain is caused by the cancerous abnormal plasma cells. The anemia is caused by damaged red blood cells and decreased platelets.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

Unknown.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This condition is currently considered incurable. However, pain can be relieved or controlled. Some persons live up to 5 years after symptoms appear, and medical literature cites a few instances of unexplained recovery.

Scientific research into causes and treatment continues, so there is hope for increasingly effective treatment and cure.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Recurrent infections.
- Kidney failure.
- Spontaneous bleeding.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

Diagnostic tests may include laboratory blood studies, biopsy of bone marrow, X-rays, MRI and bone scan.

- Radiation therapy to relieve bone pain.
- Hospitalization in late stages.
- Bone marrow transplants from siblings can be an effective treatment for a few patients.
- Additional information available from the American Cancer Society, local branch listed in the telephone directory, or call (800) ACS-2345. Another source is the Cancer Information Clearinghouse at (800) 4-CANCER.

### MEDICATIONS

- Anticancer and cortisone drugs (chemotherapy).
- Pain relievers.
- Antibiotics to fight infections.
- Blood transfusions if anemia becomes severe.

### ACTIVITY

Stay as active as pain or bone complications allow.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of multiple myeloma.
- The following occur during treatment:
  - Fever.
  - Any sign of infection (pain, swelling, redness, tenderness or warmth) anywhere in the body.
  - Swelling of the feet and ankles.
  - Urination discomfort or decreased urine output in 1 day.
  - Unexplained bleeding from any part of the body.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.