The Facts about Multiple Myeloma

Multiple myeloma (MM) is a cancer of plasma cells—a type of white blood cell that produces antibodies.[1]

In MM, important components of the immune system replicate uncontrollably and accumulate in the bone marrow. Rather than making normal antibodies, myeloma cells tend to overproduce a useless antibody known as M protein.[2]

QUICK FACTS

- **114,251** new cases are diagnosed annually and **229,468*** people are living with myeloma worldwide, according to GLOBOCAN[3]
- It is estimated that more than **26,000** new cases will be diagnosed in the United States in 2015, and more than **11,000** deaths are expected to occur[4]
- **Third most common** blood cancer in the United States, after non-Hodgkin's lymphoma[5]
- The incidence of MM increased by nearly **30 percent** between 1975 and 2010[7]
- Most people are approximately **65** years old at the time of diagnosis[8]
- The five-year relative survival rate is **44.9%**[7]

*5-year prevalence

CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

The exact cause of MM is unknown, and most people with MM have no known risk factors other than age.[8] Several factors, however, may increase risk for myeloma:

- Viral infections, such as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV)[9]
- Gaucher disease, a hereditary metabolic disorder[10]
- Being of African-American descent[8]
- Relatives who also have MM[8]

SYMPTOMS[2,8]

Sign or symptom	Impact on patient
Anemia (shortage of red blood cells)	Fatigue, weakness, shortness of breath, dizziness
Thrombocytopenia (shortage of platelets)	Serious bleeding, bruising
Leukopenia (shortage of white blood cells)	Decreased ability to resist and fight infections, frequent fevers
High protein level in the serum and/or urine	Abnormal thickening of blood leading to confusion, dizziness and symptoms of stroke, possible kidney damage
Bone problems and damage	Bone pain, bone lesions, fracture of bone (most common in the vertebrae of the spine)
High blood calcium	Mental confusion, dehydration, constipation, fatigue, weakness, loss of appetite, kidney damage
Kidney problems	Weakness, shortness of breath, itching, leg swelling

References

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