Multiple Myeloma - Symptoms and Signs

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Symptoms and Signs

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about body changes and other things that can signal a problem that may need medical care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

People with multiple myeloma may experience the following symptoms and signs. Sometimes, people with multiple myeloma do not show any of these symptoms. For people with myeloma who have no symptoms, their cancer may be discovered by a blood or urine test performed for some other reason, such as at an annual physical. Or, these symptoms may be caused by a medical condition that is not cancer.

- Anemia [2] is a low level of red blood cells, which happens when myeloma plasma cells suppress or crowd out healthy red blood cells.
- Fatigue [3] is usually caused by anemia and occurs in most people with myeloma.
- Bone pain is a common symptom. Myeloma cells grow in the bone marrow, the spongy tissue inside of the bone, and cause local bone damage or generalized thinning of the bone, called osteoporosis. This makes the bone more likely to break. The back or ribs are the most common sites of bone pain, but any bone can be affected. Pain is usually worse with movement and at night. If cancer is in the spine, the vertebrae (individual bones that make up the spine) can collapse, which is known as a compression fracture. In advanced multiple myeloma, a patient may lose inches from his or her height due to compressed vertebrae.
- Pain [4], numbness and weakness can happen sometime when collapse of the vertebra pushes against the spinal cord or pinches a nerve root coming out of the spine.
- Kidney damage or failure: The "M protein" produced by the myeloma cells can clog up the kidney filter and cause kidney damage or failure
- Weight loss [5],nausea [6], thirst, muscle weakness, and mental confusion symptoms are related to kidney failure, hypercalcemia (high calcium levels in the blood), or other imbalances in blood chemicals.
- Hypercalcemia [7], resulting in symptoms of drowsiness, constipation, and kidney damage. Hypercalcemia is a high level of calcium in the blood that can occur as a result of bone breakdown.
- Fever andInfections [8], especially of the upper respiratory tract and lungs. Patients with myeloma have lower immunity, making it harder to fight infection.
- Blood clots [9], nosebleeds, bleeding gums, bruising, and hazy vision caused by hyperviscosity, which is thickened blood, or low platelets.

If you are concerned about one or more of the symptoms or signs on this list, please talk with your doctor. Your doctor will ask how long and how often you?ve been experiencing the symptom(s), in addition to other questions. This is to help find out the cause of the problem, called adiagnosis [10].

If cancer is diagnosed, relieving symptoms remains an important part of cancer care and treatment. This may also be called symptom management, palliative care, or supportive care. Be sure to talk with your health care team about symptoms you experience, including any new symptoms or a change in symptoms.

The next section helps explain what tests and scans may be needed to learn more about the cause of the symptoms. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Diagnosis, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/25242
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/25048
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/25259
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/25263
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/25052
[7] http://www.cancer.net/node/25255
[8] http://www.cancer.net/node/25256
[9] http://www.cancer.net/node/25245
[10] http://www.cancer.net/node/19372