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[Myelodysplastic Syndromes - MDS - Risk Factors](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 11/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing MDS. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of developing a disease. Although risk factors often influence the development of MDS, most do not directly cause MDS. Some people with several risk factors never develop MDS, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

The following factors may raise a person's risk of developing MDS:

- **Age.** MDS occurs most often in people older than 60 and is less common in younger people. MDS is rare in children.
- **Gender.** Men develop MDS more often than women.
- **Exposure to environmental/occupational hazards.** Long-term exposure to benzene or other toxins, such as tobacco smoke and insecticides, may increase the risk of developing MDS.
- **Previous chemotherapy or radiation treatment.** Approximately 20% of people who develop MDS previously received chemotherapy or radiation therapy. This type of MDS is

called secondary MDS (see [Subtypes and Classification](#) [3]).

- **Genetics.** Most often, MDS is not inherited, meaning passed from parent to child within a family. However, the following inherited genetic conditions may increase a person's risk of developing MDS:
 - Fanconi anemia
 - Shwachman-Diamond syndrome
 - Diamond Blackfan anemia
 - Congenital neutropenia
 - Familial platelet disorder

The [next section in this guide is Symptoms and Signs](#) [4] and it explains what body changes or medical problems this disease can cause. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/myelodysplastic-syndromes-mds/risk-factors>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19386>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19384>