

Facts About Multiple Myeloma & What You Can Do Now



Have You Heard?

Multiple myeloma (MM) is a rare type of blood cancer that disproportionately impacts Black people. By being mindful and proactive with our health, we can catch it early and help treat it.



Let's get the facts about multiple myeloma. That way, we know what to look for and how we can get ahead of it.

FACT

Black people are 2x more likely to be diagnosed with MM than other groups of people.

Knowing what puts us at greater risk for multiple myeloma is the first step in protecting our health.

It's important to be conscious of factors that could increase your risk of developing MM. Below are a few of these risks. Check off those that apply to you and discuss with your doctor.

- ☐ You are 60 or older
- ☐ You're a Black man or woman
- ☐ You have close family members who have or have had MM
- ☐ You are overweight
- ☐ You've been diagnosed with a plasma cell disease like MGUS (monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance), solitary plasmacytoma, or smoldering myeloma

FACT

Annual blood tests can help catch rare cancers like MM.

Let's face it — if we don't feel sick, going to the doctor can fall to the bottom of our to-do list. It's important to remember: just because we can't always feel what's happening in our bodies doesn't mean something isn't going on.

We can stay on top of our health by getting regular checkups with blood work to test for diseases we are at risk for developing. Routine blood work can help us catch diseases like MM earlier, so be sure to ask your doctor about your test results — especially if we have MM risk factors or experience symptoms. We'll be glad we did.

FACT

We might not feel the signs and symptoms of MM because they might be mistaken for other health problems.

Like many types of cancers, multiple myeloma (MM) can form and grow in our body without us knowing it's there.

If you're at risk of MM and experience any of the signs and symptoms below, check the boxes and ask your doctor about them at your next visit:

- ☐ Sudden severe back pain
- ☐ Nausea or stomach pain
- ☐ Kidney problems or damage (shortness of breath, itching, leg swelling)
- ☐ Infections that are hard to recover from
- ☐ Loss of appetite and losing weight
- ☐ Fatigue, confusion, dizziness, slurred speech
- ☐ Severe thirst
- ☐ Numbness or muscle weakness in the legs
- ☐ Severe constipation



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FACT

Black people with MM tend to have better results when treated early.

There's no cure for multiple myeloma, but it *is* treatable. Actually, studies have shown that we respond better to treatment than other groups — especially when MM is caught early.

Did you know: the average time between diagnosis and treatment is almost 2 times longer for Black people when compared with White people? That's why it's so important to be proactive about our health and schedule annual blood work.

If your doctor finds that your blood work reveals signs, such as increased calcium, increased protein, or anemia, ask them if any additional tests are needed — like an M-protein test. From there, after confirming it's not another condition or disease, they may refer you to a hematologist-oncologist, a doctor specializing in treating blood cancer.

They might request a few additional steps to determine your stage of MM:

STAGE AND PROGRESSION OF MULTIPLE MYELOMA

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

MGUS (monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance)

Your blood tests show low levels of M-protein that might indicate you have an increased risk of developing active myeloma. MGUS does not require treatment, but it's important to get regular checkups.

Smoldering Myeloma

You have a pre-cancerous form of multiple myeloma, but it's not causing symptoms yet. You may not need treatment, but you should be checked regularly.

Active Myeloma

You have a tumor or a significant amount of cancer cells and require treatment to manage your MM.

Having a strong relationship with your doctor can make a difference in your care. But if you don't feel you have the best connection, and you have additional concerns about MM, you have other options. You can ask to explore a co-management style — where your doctor works alongside another to provide your care.

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