

Getting the Multiple Myeloma Care You Need



Things We Can Do When We Are at Risk

Let's face it, many of us have had or know someone who has had disappointing experiences with the medical system. As a result, we might be less likely to go to the doctor and get the care we need before we feel sick.

If we begin to experience symptoms of multiple myeloma (MM), a rare blood cancer, it may be a sign that it has already formed and spread throughout our body. The more we wait, the harder it becomes to treat.



Putting off our care can have consequences for us – and the people we care for.

DON'T LET BARRIERS STOP YOU

Putting our trust in the healthcare system may be difficult. Despite our complicated histories, or that many doctors may not look like us, you have power in your care. Here are some tips to keep in mind whenever you encounter roadblocks:

- **If you don't feel seen, heard, or have a connection with your doctor**, ask for a second opinion from a doctor who might be a better fit for you. Some of the best recommendations come from family and friends
- **If cost is a concern to get the best health care**, ask about care programs that can help cover the cost of appointments, treatment, or medicines
- **If the emotional and mental toll is too much**, acknowledge it's OK not to be OK, and it's OK to ask for help. Sometimes, our daily stressors and fears for our health are a lot to shoulder alone



We speak up for many things in life – our health care shouldn't be the exception.

SPEAK UP AND SPEAK OUT

No matter who cares for us, being open and honest about how we are feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically makes it easier for our care teams to find the best solutions. When we ask questions, we are advocating for ourselves. In the process, we invite conversations with our care team and show them that we are concerned with our health and decision-makers.

KNOWING WHAT TO ASK ABOUT

There are certain things we can look out for and bring up with our doctor if our routine test results come back abnormal — **remember C.R.A.B.:**

C. **Calcium Levels:** This is when too much calcium is found in the blood. If your calcium levels are **higher than 10.2 mg/dL**, it could be a sign of hypercalcemia.

R. **Renal Failure (also known as kidney failure):** The kidneys may not function properly, and abnormal proteins called creatinine will build up in the blood. Talk to your doctor if your levels are **greater than 1.3 mg/dL for men and 1.1 mg/dL for women.**

A. **Anemia:** This is when the body doesn't have enough healthy red blood cells. Hemoglobin (Hgb) is an important part of the red blood cell that carries iron and oxygen to the muscles in the body. If your Hgb levels are **lower than 12 g/dL**, this could be a sign of anemia.

B. **Bone Pain:** Ongoing bone pain or bone breaks could be a sign that something else is going on in your body.

KNOWING WHO TO ASK

Our regular doctors know a lot about general medicine, but they likely won't be experts on rare blood cancers like MM. Instead, a hematologist-oncologist will be responsible for the specialized care for MM. Here are details to consider with each member of your care team:

Primary Care Doctor:

- If you have risk factors, ask your doctor to check for signs of **C.R.A.B.** in your blood work
- If your tests come back abnormal, and your doctor suspects a blood cancer, ask them whether you should seek a specialist, like a hematologist-oncologist

Hematologist-Oncologist:

- Once you're referred for a possible diagnosis of a blood cancer, additional testing may be needed to confirm if you have MM. They may recommend image scans or bone marrow tests

Nursing Team:

- There will be many nurses in your corner. If you are diagnosed with MM, ask your nursing team for information about MM and the details of your care. They are there to help you better understand MM and manage your personalized care plan



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