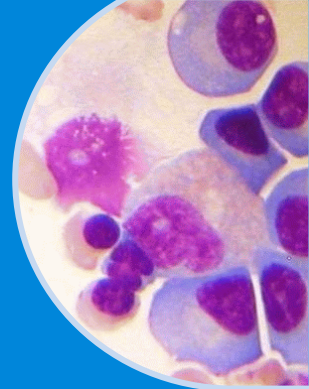


# FACT SHEET

## Myeloma - What is it?



### About us

The Leukaemia Foundation is the only national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the care and cure of patients and families living with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and related blood disorders.

We invest millions of dollars in the work of Australia's leading researchers to develop better treatments and cures and provide free services to support patients and their families.

We receive no ongoing government funding. We rely on the generosity of the community and corporate sector to further our Vision to Cure and Mission to Care.

### We can help you

Our range of free services supports thousands of Australians, from diagnosis, through treatment and beyond. To learn more, please call 1800 620 420 to speak with one of our Support Services team.

### You can help us

There are many ways that you can help us to improve the quality of life for people with blood cancer. From making a donation, to signing up for an event; from volunteering, or joining us as a corporate sponsor - please call 1800 500 088 or go to [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au) to learn more.

Last updated: Feb 2011

**More than 1400\* Australians are expected to be diagnosed with myeloma this year – equivalent to four people every day.**

**Myeloma, also known as multiple myeloma, is a cancer of plasma cells that arises in the bone marrow. Plasma cells\*\* are the type of white blood cell that produce anti-bodies to help fight infection. In myeloma, large numbers of abnormal cancerous plasma cells, called myeloma cells, are made in the bone marrow. These myeloma cells crowd out the bone marrow and reduce the number of normal red cells, white cells and platelets.**

Eighty percent of people diagnosed with myeloma are over the age of 60 and it is uncommon in people under 40.

#### Symptoms of Myeloma

- Bone lesions leading to pain and fractures
- Anaemia and fatigue
- Kidney damage leading to renal failure
- Recurrent and /or persistent infections

#### Do we know what causes myeloma?

The cause of myeloma remains unknown but there are certain factors that may put some people at a higher risk of developing this disease. These factors include exposure to high doses of radiation and ongoing exposure to certain industrial or environmental chemicals.

#### How is myeloma treated?

There is currently no cure for myeloma. Treatment to control the growth of the disease can involve targeted therapies, chemotherapy, often in combination with steroid therapy, radiotherapy or maintenance therapy and stem cell transplants.

The treatment plan will depend on the stage of the disease at diagnosis, the person's age and their general health. In most cases with treatment the myeloma can be controlled and a period of stable disease can be achieved. Maintenance therapy is used to prolong remission for as long as possible once it has been achieved.

Myeloma had the second highest increase in cancer incidence in the 10 years between 1993 and 2003 and the highest of all blood cancers\*. The cause of this increase is unknown.

**The Leukaemia Foundation publishes the guides 'Understanding Leukaemias, Lymphomas, Myeloma and Related Blood Disorders' and 'Living with Leukaemias, Lymphomas, Myeloma and Related Disorders: Information and Support'.**

\*Projections sourced from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Estimates are calculated using actual diagnoses data collected from 2007 and annually prior to this year. \*\*These plasma cells are different to the fluid in which red and white blood cells and platelets are suspended, which is also known as plasma.

For more information, freecall 1800 620 420  
email [info@leukaemia.org.au](mailto:info@leukaemia.org.au) or visit [www.leukaemia.org.au](http://www.leukaemia.org.au)