

Good morning. Thank you so much for inviting me to speak with you. Today I'm going to tell you about a health issue that's especially important for African Americans over the age of 50—multiple myeloma. Myeloma is a type of blood cancer. More specifically, myeloma is a cancer of one type of white blood cell, the type of cell that fights infection. Myeloma is not the same as melanoma, a kind of skin cancer.

Many new treatments are now available to treat myeloma. These treatments allow many patients to enjoy a good quality of life for years. African Americans are nearly twice as likely as whites to develop myeloma, and yet are less likely to have access to new, state-of-the-art treatments.

In the beginning stages of myeloma, some patients have no signs or symptoms of disease. In about 20 percent of myeloma patients, the cancer is detected before symptoms appear. A diagnosis can be made by doing routine blood work, which will show changes in blood and/or urine.

### Now we'll go through some of the most common symptoms of myeloma:

- **Bone pain and/or fractures.** Bone pain is the most common early symptom of myeloma. Most patients feel pain in their back or ribs, but it can occur in any bone. The pain varies in intensity and is made worse by movement. Bones can become frail enough to break in a minor fall or injury and even during normal activities, such as walking, lifting, sneezing or coughing.
- **Feeling tired and weak.** These symptoms can be due to low red blood cell counts, also called anemia.
- **Getting sick much more often than usual, due to a weakened immune system.** Myeloma patients may experience repeated infections because the body can't fight invading viruses, bacteria or other diseases.
- **Other signs and symptoms include:** numbness, tingling, burning or pain in the hands or feet; increased thirst, urination and constipation; and abnormal bleeding, headaches, chest pain, shortness of breath or decreased alertness.
- Having any of these symptoms can also mean that you have another condition or disease; it does not mean that you have myeloma.

*Do you or someone you know have these symptoms? Talk to your doctor.*

### Risk Factors

Doctors don't know why some cells become myeloma cells and others don't. For most people who have myeloma, there are no obvious reasons why they developed the disease. There are some factors that may increase the risk of developing myeloma, including:

- Race - Blacks are nearly twice as likely as whites to develop myeloma.
- Age - Most people who develop myeloma are over 50 years old.
- Sex - More men than women develop myeloma.
- Medical History - People with a history of MGUS (a condition in which an abnormal protein, known as monoclonal protein or M protein, is in the blood).
- Obesity - New research suggests that obese people have a higher rate of myeloma.

## What Doctor Treats Myeloma?

Hematologist-Oncologists take care of myeloma patients, as well as patients with other types of blood cancer. Hematologists are specialists in the study of blood diseases and oncologists are doctors who treat cancer.

## Treatment

- There have been many important advances in treatment, and the number of treatment options continues to increase. The goals of research for myeloma treatment are to develop new treatments and to decrease the side effects of treatment.
- Research has shown that African Americans are less likely to be referred to clinical trials. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Clinical Trial Support Center can help you to determine if a clinical trial is an option for you if you've been diagnosed with myeloma or any other blood cancer.
- Treatment outcomes are different from person to person; results depend on many individual factors.

## What You Should Do

- Watch for signs and symptoms
- Talk with your doctor about your signs and symptoms
- Learn more about myeloma and get support by calling **The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Information Specialists at 844.955.LINK (5465)**. Information Specialists are oncology (cancer) professionals who can help cancer patients navigate the best route from diagnosis through treatment, clinical trials and survivorship. They will speak with you one-on-one about your individual situation and provide resources and support.
- Here are the telephone number, website and email address.
  - o Telephone number: **844.955.LINK (5465)**
  - o Website: **[www.LLS.org/MyelomaLink](http://www.LLS.org/MyelomaLink)**
  - o Email: **[MyelomaLink@LLS.org](mailto:MyelomaLink@LLS.org)**.