

Multiple Myeloma Facts

Multiple myeloma is the second most common blood cancer after non-Hodgkins lymphoma and represents 1% of all cancers and 2% of all cancer deaths.

Multiple myeloma is a cancer of the plasma cells which reside in the bone marrow and can cause bone lesions and kidney dysfunction.

Every day 7 more Canadians are diagnosed with this incurable, but now very treatable, disease.

According to Canadian Cancer Statistics 2008, the total new cases of multiple myeloma in Canada in 2008 are estimated at 2,100 - 1,150 males and 960 females.

In New Brunswick in 2005, there were 45 cases of myeloma diagnosed. Out of those cases, 20 were female and 25 were male.

In the year 2000, the life expectancy of a myeloma patient was 3-5 years. Research, along with the development of new treatments, has increased the average life expectancy of a myeloma patient and many are now living 10 years or longer.

To date there is no known cause for this cancer but environmental factors are thought to contribute to the increasing incidence. Agricultural workers, petroleum workers, pulp and paper employees, cosmetologists and firefighters have a higher than average chance of developing myeloma. Multiple myeloma may be the result of several risk factors acting together.

Myeloma was considered to be a disease of the elderly but now the average age at diagnosis is early 60's with many patients much younger.

While still considered to be incurable, multiple myeloma is close to becoming identified as a chronic disease.