CANCERcare®
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fact sheet

BONE MARROW TRANSPLANTATION AS A TREATMENT OPTION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Bone marrow transplants are an important treatment option for people with blood cancers.



WHAT IS BONE MARROW?

Bone marrow is the soft, spongy tissue inside of bones where blood cells are made.

WHAT IS A BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT?

Bone marrow transplants are used to make it possible for patients to receive very high doses of chemotherapy and/or radiation to kill the cancer cells and help them recover.

During a bone marrow transplant, stem cells (blood cells that divide to make new bloods cells within the bone marrow) are taken from either the person living with cancer or from a donor. Keeping the stem cells on hold, doctors then give the patient high doses of chemotherapy to destroy as many cancer cells as possible. The stem cells are then transplanted into the person living with cancer, allowing healthy blood cells to grow, new blood cells to form and boosting the individual's defense against infection.

When a person living with cancer receives his or her own stem cells, the procedure is called an **autologous stem cell transplant**. When someone living with cancer gets stem cells from a donor, the procedure is known as an **allogeneic stem cell transplant.**

IS A TRANSPLANT RIGHT FOR YOU?

Many factors are considered to determine whether an individual is a good candidate for a bone marrow transplant. These factors include:

- The type of cancer
- The cancer's stage
- How aggressive the cancer is
- How it has responded to prior treatment

Age and general physical condition are also taken into account. Generally, transplants are appropriate for people under the age of 70 whose kidneys, lungs, liver, and heart are considered healthy enough.

Your doctor, who is familiar with the details of your diagnosis, can give you more information about whether a transplant is an option for you.

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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Members of your health care team are very knowledgeable about the different aspects of blood cancers and will likely be your main source of information about your diagnosis and treatment. Here are some questions to ask your health care team when considering a bone marrow transplant:

- What are the side effects?
- Will I need additional treatment before or after the transplant?
- Are there other treatment options I should consider?
- What kind of stem cell transplant will I have? If a donor needed, how will we find one?
- How will the transplant change my normal activities?
- What follow-up care will be needed after the transplant is complete?

GET SUPPORT

It is helpful to keep in mind that there are many sources of information and support for people considering a bone marrow transplant. Oncology social workers understand the complex issues that can arise for someone living with cancer. An oncology social worker can help you navigate this process and make you feel comfortable talking with your health care team. Cancer*Care*'s professional oncology social workers can help, free of charge. To speak with a professional oncology social worker, call 800-813-HOPE (4673).

RESOURCES

NMDP
www.nmdp.org

Blood & Marrow Transplant Information Network
888-597-7674
www.bmtinfonet.org

National Bone Marrow Transplant Link
800-546-5268
www.nbmtlink.org

The Bone Marrow Foundation
800-365-1336
wwww.bonemarrow.org



Cancer*Care*® Can Help

Founded in 1944, Cancer*Care* is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All Cancer*Care* services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit **www.cancercare.org** or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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