



Health Awareness

Free Iron Screening For People Living With Myelodysplastic Syndromes

(NAPSA)—Do you or someone you know suffer from myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS)? Did you know that multiple blood transfusions can put you at risk for a serious condition?

In the United States alone, between 10,000 and 15,000 new cases of MDS are diagnosed each year, mostly in men and Caucasians. The exact cause of MDS is unknown in the majority of cases; however, it can be caused by the effects of radiation and chemotherapy for the treatment of cancers. Forty percent of patients with MDS will need blood transfusions to treat their disease. But this transfused blood contains additional iron that the body cannot remove on its own. People who have had 10 or more blood transfusions over their lifetime might be at risk for a condition known as chronic iron overload due to blood transfusions. This can happen even if years have passed between transfusions.

Many patients are not aware of the risk of transfusional iron overload. When left untreated, chronic iron overload due to blood transfusions can seriously damage organs in the body. This may lead to heart and liver disease, diabetes, infertility or even growth problems. In some cases, the damage can be permanent. That's why it's very important for patients with MDS who are receiving blood transfusions to talk with their doctor about monitoring iron levels during treatment.

A Patient's Story

Bob Weinberg was diagnosed



INSIDE:
FREE Serum Ferritin Test

If you've had 10 or more blood transfusions,
there are 1000 reasons to test for Iron Overload.

A voucher for a free serum ferritin screening to test for iron overload is available online at www.freeirontest.com.

with MDS over 10 years ago at the age of 48. During a routine physical, his doctor discovered that his blood cell count was extremely low. After a bone marrow test, Bob was diagnosed with MDS.

"I had never heard of MDS before I was diagnosed," Bob said.

Bob receives blood transfusions to manage his MDS and knows that there are serious complications associated with more than 10 transfusions. Bob had a blood transfusion every four weeks in the first year alone. In the time since his diagnosis, he's had over 260 transfusions.

Today, Bob monitors his iron levels with an iron test known as a serum ferritin test. The serum ferritin test measures how much iron is in the blood. Bob works

with his doctor to check his blood iron every 60 days to make sure they are at a safe level. Iron levels above 1,000 mcg/L can lead to serious organ damage.

"Many people are unaware of the serious consequences of transfusional iron overload. Anyone who has multiple transfusions should have their iron tested regularly," explains Bob.

A New Program Can Help

Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation is sponsoring a free serum ferritin screening program. The program offers a free screening voucher online at www.freeirontest.com. Patients can go online to print out the voucher to take to their physician to order a serum ferritin test.

What You Can Do

People living with MDS should remember the following:

- Know how many transfusions you have received. If you or someone you know has had more than 10 blood transfusions, speak to your doctor about getting a serum ferritin test for iron overload.

- A serum ferritin number of 1,000 mcg/L may mean you have iron overload, which can lead to serious health consequences. So talk to your doctor about getting tested.

- If you're diagnosed with iron overload, remember that it's important for your doctor to monitor your iron levels.

Learning More

For more information on MDS and transfusional iron overload and how you can get a free serum ferritin screening, visit www.freeirontest.com.