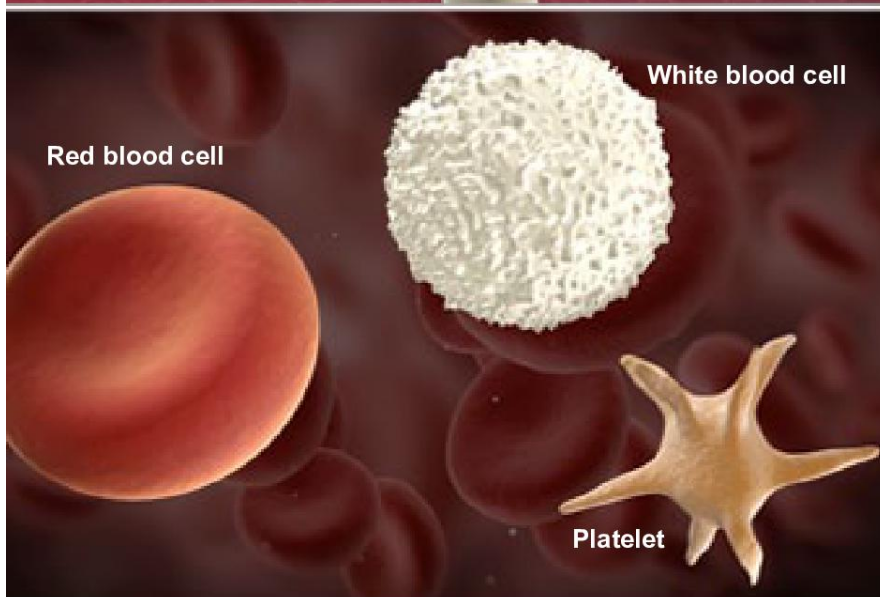




Myelodysplastic Syndromes (MDS)



Overview

This is the collective name for a group of bone marrow disorders. Bone marrow is a soft, spongy tissue found inside the large bones in your body. It's where new blood cells are made. With MDS, also called "bone marrow failure disorder," the marrow does not produce enough healthy blood cells.

Blood Cells

Your blood contains red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets. Red blood cells carry oxygen to your body's cells and remove carbon dioxide waste. White blood cells help your body fight infection. And platelets help your blood clot to prevent excessive bleeding. Shortages of any of these cells can cause severe problems in your body. With MDS, any or all of these blood cells may be affected.

Triggers

Doctors don't know the exact cause of MDS. It is not contagious, and it is not passed down from parent to child. It most commonly develops in older people. Doctors think some people may be born with a tendency to develop MDS. Some cases are linked to specific triggers. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy are known to trigger MDS. Exposure to certain toxins in the environment can trigger it, too. But in some people, MDS is never linked to any specific trigger at all.

Symptoms

In the early stages of MDS, you may not be aware of any symptoms. But as it progresses, it may cause fatigue, shortness of breath and frequent infections. Your skin may become pale. You may bruise and bleed easily. And you may develop a rash of tiny spots on your skin.

Treatment

Treatment options for MDS may include blood transfusions, medications and a stem cell transplant. Your doctor can develop a treatment plan that is right for your needs.