



Diagnosing Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML) - A Quick Guide

Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Diagnosing Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML)' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Tests for AML
- Further tests for AML
- Questions for your doctor

Acute myeloid leukaemia tests

If you have worrying symptoms, you usually begin by seeing your family doctor. Your GP will ask about your general health and symptoms. They will examine you by feeling for swollen organs or glands, and looking for signs of abnormal bleeding. They may also order a blood test.

At the hospital

If your GP suspects that you have leukaemia, they will suggest you go and see a specialist doctor called a haematologist. Haematologists treat diseases of the blood. Your haematologist will ask you to have some tests.

Blood tests are the most important tests for acute leukaemia. A pathologist looks at

your blood sample under a microscope to count the different blood cells. You may have X-rays to check your general health.

Bone marrow test

Your specialist may want to check a sample of your bone marrow for signs of leukaemia or other illnesses. In a bone marrow aspiration, the doctor puts a thin needle into the centre of one of your bones, to draw out some of the liquid bone marrow. You will have a local anaesthetic injection first. In a bone marrow biopsy, the doctor uses a slightly larger needle to remove a small amount of bone and marrow together. You usually have an aspiration and biopsy at the same time.

Further tests for acute myeloid leukaemia

If test results show you have acute myeloid leukaemia (AML), you will have further tests.

Blood and bone marrow tests

You will probably have more blood tests. You will have more bone marrow tests at various times throughout your treatment and follow up care. Bone marrow tests can help to diagnose the correct type of leukaemia, show how well the leukaemia is responding to treatment, and check for



leukaemia cells after you've finished treatment. There is information about having a bone marrow test in the 'cancer tests' section of CancerHelp UK.

Tissue typing

You will have this done if your doctor thinks that a donor bone marrow transplant may be a possible treatment for you. Tissue typing is a set of blood tests that show how closely a possible bone marrow donor's tissue matches your own.

Finding leukaemia cells left behind after treatment

'Minimal residual disease' or MRD means that a small number of leukaemia cells have been left behind after treatment. One type of test for MRD looks for genetic changes in the cells. Another type checks for certain proteins made by leukaemia cells.

Questions for your doctor about acute myeloid leukaemia tests

- What tests are you going to do?
- Why do I have to have these tests?
- What will the tests show?
- Are any of these tests painful?
- Are there any risks with any of these tests?
- Can I eat normally before these tests?
- What are the side effects of these tests?
- Do I have to stay in hospital for any of these tests?
- Can I bring someone with me when I have the tests?
- How long will it take to get the results of the tests?
- Who will give me the test results?

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in September 2010. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2010. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).

More information

For more information about acute myeloid leukaemia, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040** 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday