



# FACTS ABOUT

## ESSENTIAL THROMBOCYTHEMIA (ET) (e-SEN-chel throm-boe-sigh-THEE-me-uh)

### WHAT IS ET?

ET is a specific type of myeloproliferative neoplasm, or MPN. It is a rare, chronic blood cancer in which a person's body makes too many platelets (also known as thrombocytes). Platelets in patients with ET may not function appropriately and can cause a blockage in blood vessels, or less commonly, bleeding problems.

ET is also known as primary thrombocythemia.

### HOW IS ET DIAGNOSED?

ET is diagnosed through tests performed by Healthcare Professionals. These tests can help detect:

- A high platelet count that persists over time
- The presence of a *JAK2* or other genetic mutation
- No evidence of a different condition causing increased platelet counts

Some of the blood and bone marrow tests used to help confirm a diagnosis of ET may include a complete blood count (CBC), a blood smear, genetic testing, bone marrow aspiration, and bone marrow biopsy.

### HOW COMMON IS ET?

ET is a rare disease affecting about 71,000 to 88,000 people in the United States. It is more common in adults older than 50 years of age and is more common in women than men.

### WHAT CAUSES ET?

The cause of ET is not fully understood. However, about half of all people with this condition have a specific mutation—or change—in a certain gene in the body called the Janus kinase 2 (*JAK2*) gene.

### WHAT FACTORS AFFECT THE COURSE OF ET?

There are some factors that can affect the course or outcome of ET. They include the age of the patient and whether the patient has a history of a clot or other risk factors such as diabetes or high cholesterol.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ET?

Some people with ET have no symptoms. They may not know they have the condition until it is diagnosed after a routine blood test or they develop a blood clot. Clots caused by ET most often happen in the brain, hands, and feet.

Symptoms of ET depend on where the clot forms and may include:

- Headache
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Unusual bleeding
- Chest pain
- Weakness
- Fainting
- Vision changes
- Numbness or tingling in the hands and feet
- Redness, throbbing, and burning pain in the hands and feet

About 50% of people with ET have an enlarged spleen.

## **WHAT OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS CAN ET CAUSE?**

ET can cause more serious problems, including clotting complications, pregnancy complications, excessive bleeding, stroke, and heart attack.

Some people who have ET may develop acute leukemia, which is a type of blood and bone marrow cancer. In some people, ET can progress to myelofibrosis (my-ah-lo-fye-BRO-sis), or MF. This is a condition in which a defect in the bone marrow causes it to make too many or too few blood cells and can cause scar tissue to build up in the bone marrow.

## **WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS?**

ET typically does not shorten life expectancy. However, it's important to have medical supervision to prevent or treat complications.

With ET, each person's medical situation is unique and should be evaluated individually by a Healthcare Professional who specializes in treating blood cancers.

## **HOW IS ET MONITORED?**

For people who are younger than 60 and have no symptoms or other risk factors for blood clots, ET is typically monitored by routine checkups and periodic tests. People who are over 60 and who have had blood clots typically require medicine or procedures to lower their platelet counts.

All people with ET need regular monitoring and medical care to detect any changes in their condition. Blood tests can show if the condition is getting worse. The goal is to control symptoms and reduce the risk of complications by working with a Healthcare Professional.

## **WHAT'S YOUR *ET STATE OF MINE*?**

If you are living with ET, your symptoms, blood counts, and even your feelings can help you identify your *ET STATE OF MINE*—or where you are on your journey with ET. To learn more, visit [VoicesOfMPN.com](http://VoicesOfMPN.com).

