

Is Genetic Testing Right For Me?

Genetic testing is a very personal decision. You should discuss genetic testing with a Genetics Counselor or with your healthcare provider if you have answered **YES** to any of the questions on the **KNOW YOUR FAMILY MEDICAL HISTORY** screening assessment form offered by Hopes Source. There are many important factors to consider when thinking about genetic testing.

When Is Genetic Testing Right For Me?

A Genetics Counselor or your healthcare provider can help walk you through the benefits, risks and limitations of genetic testing and how these might impact you and your family. Here are just a few examples of those factors:

- **How would you feel if you learned that you and/or your family members were at increased risk for breast, ovarian or other types of cancer?**
- **Do you feel empowered by knowledge and information?**
- **Do you feel anxious or worried about learning something that may be difficult to hear (about you or your loved ones)?**
- **What would you do with your genetic test results?**
- **Would you want to share your results with your relatives?**
- **Would you follow a new medical plan (possibly including considering surgeries), if you were found to be at increased risk for certain cancers?**
- **Would your insurance plan cover the cost of your testing or would you be willing to pay out of your own pocket for this testing?**

What Is Genetic Counseling?

You may have an appointment for genetic counseling, or have heard about meeting with a genetic counselor. Genetic counseling is the process of helping people learn about genetic conditions, understand and adapt to their chances of having a genetic condition and make informed decisions about any genetic testing and treatment options.

What Is A Genetic Counselor?

Genetic counselors (GCs) are specially-trained healthcare providers, with expertise in genetics and communication. They can address your or your family's questions about genetic conditions in a supportive manner and help you adjust to the information they learn.

What Do Genetic Counselors Do?

In the cancer setting, GCs are often part of a healthcare team that may include surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, nurses, physician assistants and others. A GC often speaks with someone (and his/her family) before genetic testing to discuss their medical and family histories, appropriate genetic testing options and the pros/cons of genetic testing. GCs often send testing to a specialized laboratory to perform the genetic test, and typically receive the results. GCs generally consult with patients (and their families) after testing to discuss their results. This usually involves discussing

cancer risks, additional testing options, implications to family members and screening/treatments to consider.

As genetic testing technology advances, most genetic testing laboratories include GCs as part of their teams and may have many roles throughout the company. GCs may work directly with healthcare providers to help them determine the best testing option to choose for a patient and to understand the implications of that testing on the patient and his/her family members. GCs may also be actively involved in interpreting genetic test results, to make them as understandable as possible. As well, GCs may advocate for those having genetic testing in many ways by developing written materials for families (like informational brochures and videos), partnering with local outreach organizations to support their efforts, and securely sharing data and research with the scientific community to advance the understanding of hereditary cancer syndromes.

Why Should I Speak To A Genetic Counselor?

Genetic testing for hereditary cancer syndromes can be complex. With new technologies and discoveries in the field, there are usually many testing options. It's important to understand what testing can and cannot tell you and discuss what information you'd like to know. Some people want to know as much as possible about their cancer risk for many cancers; others just want to know their risk for one or two cancers based on their personal and/or family histories. For some, they may have already had genetic testing that did not find a mutation and may want to consider another test to see if they can get a helpful result.

Talk To Someone With Specialized Knowledge

Because of the complex nature of genetic testing and the results, it is very important to speak with someone with expertise in cancer genetics for genetic counseling before you have testing. Even if genetic testing does not feel right for you, you may still want to meet with a healthcare provider experienced in cancer genetics to learn more about your cancer risk and best choices for reducing them. Deciding to have genetic testing can be a hard decision. By speaking with a healthcare provider with expertise in this area, he or she can help you navigate your options to help you make an informed decision that works best for you.

A GC or other specialty-trained healthcare provider can help you understand what the genetic test means for you and your family, answer questions you may have, and provide resources to help you. GCs can also serve as a resource for you after testing, to help understand your cancer risk, talk with your family members and support you in many ways.

TO SPEAK WITH A GENETIC COUNSELOR:

Call the Hopes Source Helpline

1-800-345-7201

Or visit us online www.hopessource.org