

Why Should I Have Genetic Counseling?

Time and expertise

Genetic counselors are specialized health care professionals who can take time to sit down with you and your family members to collect detailed information about your family history of cancer. Genetic counselors are trained to carefully analyze all of this information to give you a personalized assessment and discuss all of the testing options available to you. While your doctor may not be able to spend as much time as he or she would like to discuss all of this information with you, the genetic counselor can work with your doctor in understanding your test results and coordinating your care.

What you learn may surprise you

After meeting with a genetic counselor, you may learn that you do not need to consider genetic testing, or you may be offered a different genetic test than you were expecting. Screening for other cancers that you were not aware of may also be discussed with you based on your family history. A genetic counselor is trained to recognize both common and rare hereditary cancer syndromes and offer you the most appropriate and efficient genetic testing.

Help with talking through the options

Deciding whether to be tested for a hereditary cancer susceptibility is not always easy. A genetic counselor can help answer all of your questions about the testing and your personal and family history of cancer, and can also help you think about the advantages and disadvantages of genetic testing in your case. In the end, the decision is up to you, and we are here to help you make the best decision you can.

Support and resources

Sometimes people seek support related to their experience with cancer in themselves or family members. It can also be difficult to sort through information you find on the internet, at the library, or from family members. A genetic counselor can help locate useful resources for you and your family, and can help you work through the available information to find what is relevant to you.

Interpretation of results

Not all genetic information is clear-cut. Many times, genetic test results do not give an answer to the question of what is causing cancer in the family. Genetic counselors are experts in interpreting genetic testing information so that it is relevant to you and your family. In addition, you will become part of a tracking system that allows you to be notified if genetic test results are reclassified and receive periodic materials with updates from our Program.