

The Cancer Genetic Counseling Program

Although most cancers occur by chance, in some individuals cancer develops as the result of a genetic predisposition that runs in the family. This brochure is designed to answer some commonly asked questions about genetic counseling and genetic testing for cancer risk.

Who should consider genetic counseling for cancer risk?

Anyone with a personal or family history of:

- More than one family member with the same type of cancer or related cancers (e.g. breast and ovarian cancer or colon and uterine)
- Early onset cancer
- Rare cancers (e.g. male breast cancer or fallopian tube cancer)
- More than one cancer in the same individual

All individuals with questions about their risk or their children's risk of developing cancer may benefit from genetic counseling.

What does genetic counseling for cancer risk involve?

Usually there are two office visits, an initial 1-2 hour consultation and a shorter follow-up visit (for those individuals who undergo genetic testing). The genetic counselor will:

- Review your medical history
- Review your family history and draw a family tree
- Tell you what the chances are that the cancer in your family is hereditary
- Identify who in your family may have an increased risk of cancer
- Review information about the genetics of cancer predisposition
- Review the pros and cons of genetic testing, if applicable
- Review options for cancer screening and risk reduction
- Arrange genetic testing for those who choose to pursue it
- Provide information about ongoing research studies for those who are interested
- Identify other resources for interested patients (e.g. other healthcare professionals or support groups)

What are the potential benefits of learning about one's genetic risk?

Genetic counseling and genetic testing have the potential to clarify cancer risk for you and your family members. The information gained from counseling and testing may help guide healthcare decisions.

There are options for screening and prevention for many types of cancer. Some of these options are only offered to individuals known to be at high risk.

- Increased screening may help detect cancer at an early stage when it is easier to treat.
- Risk-reduction strategies may prevent cancer.

Is genetic counseling available to individuals who are unsure that they want genetic testing?

Yes. Individuals who do not pursue genetic testing can still learn valuable information about cancer risk management from a genetic counseling visit. For individuals considering genetic testing, the timing, risks, benefits and limitations need to be carefully weighed.

A genetic counselor can help you decide if testing is right for you.

The Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Cancer Genetic Counseling Program is one of the largest programs of its kind, providing individualized and comprehensive cancer risk counseling to patients and their families. All genetic counselors and medical geneticists are Board Eligible/Board Certified.

Scheduling an appointment for Cancer Genetic Counseling

The Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Cancer Genetic Counseling Program participates with most major insurance carriers.

If you have questions about the program or are interested in making an appointment, please call 212.241.6947.

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