



Cancer Genetic Counseling
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Commonly Asked Questions for Cancer Genetic Counseling Appointments GE Family Wellness Center Location

What is Genetic Counseling? What is the purpose of this visit?

During the appointment, we will look at your personal and family history of cancer and discuss the chances that cancer could run in your family. The genetic counselor can discuss the risk of cancer and also considerations about genetic testing that might impact cancer screening for you and other family members.

Genetic testing involves having a blood or saliva sample taken to determine whether a person has a change, also called mutation, in their DNA. Mutations in certain genes are related to an increased lifetime risk of specific cancers.

Who should consider genetic counseling?

Any individual who is interested in understanding their risk factors for cancer, or who wishes to discuss genetic testing would be appropriate for this program.

Cancer genetic counseling is traditionally considered for those with any of the following in their family history:

- Cancer at an early age (50 or younger)
- Two or more close relatives with the same type of cancer
- Cancer in more than one generation
- Multiple primary cancers in one person (example: colon and uterine cancer in one person)
- Rare types of cancer in the family (example: male breast cancer)
- Other factors associated with inherited cancers (such as multiple colon polyps)

If I come in for an appointment, am I required to have genetic testing?

It is your choice whether to proceed with genetic testing. The genetic counselor will review your personal and family history to provide a risk assessment for hereditary cancer predisposition. In some cases, a relative is the best person to have testing in the family. In other cases, the pattern does not fit with a hereditary predisposition and testing is not indicated. Screening recommendations are provided based on the family history.

What does it mean if someone has a hereditary predisposition for cancer?

It means the person has a mutation in a gene which increases the risk for certain cancers associated with that gene. It does not mean a person currently has cancer or will definitely develop cancer.

What is the benefit of knowing if a hereditary predisposition is in my family?

The goal of knowing a person has an increased risk to develop cancer is to prevent cancer or detect the cancer at the earliest possible stage. A person's genetic test result may be used to personalize their cancer screening and prevention plan. Often this means starting screening at younger ages and having screening at more frequent intervals. There may be surgical options or medications for reducing cancer risks as well.

I don't have children, how will this information be of any benefit?

These results could have an important impact on your current treatment or future management. It can also be important for other family members such as parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

What should I do to prepare for the appointment?

Talk with your family about the cancer that has occurred—write down any relatives that have had cancer, the type of cancer and the age when the cancer was diagnosed. Bring these notes with you to the appointment.

How long will the appointment last and what will we do in the visit?

Appointments are scheduled for 45 minute length. The appointment consists of discussion about your hereditary cancer risk factors and genetic testing, if applicable. Genetic testing is offered at the time of this visit.

Do I need to fast before the blood draw or saliva collection?

No. Eating food, drinking, smoking or taking medications will not impact this blood test. If you would prefer a saliva test, you should not eat or drink anything for 1 hour prior to your appointment. This includes food and drink, as well as water, gum or mints.

How much does this appointment cost?

There is no cost for the genetic counseling appointment or discussion about genetic testing.

How much does testing cost?

The cost of genetic testing will be covered by insurance if an individual meets specific medical criteria. For individuals that do not meet the medical criteria optional genetic testing is offered at a flat rate of \$250 cost to the patient.

Could I face discrimination for having genetic testing?

The primary federal law that protects a person from discrimination based on "genetic information" (genetic test result, family history, etc.) is the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA). For more information about GINA, go to <http://ginahelp.org/>. Your genetic counselor will also discuss this topic during the appointment.