

In The Spirit of Health

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
Cancer Center
Making Cancer History®

"I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you." - 3 John 1:2

Who needs genetic testing for cancer?

How well do you know your family's health history? Familiarizing yourself with diseases and health conditions in your family can help you better understand your own health, especially your risk for cancer.

Some cancer types can be inherited or passed down through a family and are caused by a genetic mutation, or a variation in a gene's DNA. These genetic variations can increase the likelihood of developing certain cancer types, such as breast, colorectal, ovarian, prostate or uterine cancer.

"Only around 5-10% of cancers are linked to an inherited genetic variation," said MD Anderson genetic counselor Erica Bednar. "Having a genetic variation doesn't mean you will develop cancer — it simply means you have a higher risk and can take action, such as lowering your risk with medication or surgery, or having earlier and more frequent cancer screenings."

Cancer can affect anyone, but some common risk factors are linked to tobacco use, sun exposure, inactivity and high body weight. For individuals with a strong history of cancer in the family, a physician may recommend meeting with a genetic counselor.

A genetic counselor can help you make informed decisions about your health by reviewing your family health history, evaluating your cancer risk and determining if genetic testing to look for genetic variations is right for you. Bednar says the decision to undergo genetic testing is entirely up to the individual.

"It's important to thoroughly consider genetic testing as an option," Bednar said. "Genetic testing results can also impact family members and their risk of cancer too."

For families with a history of cancer, genetic testing can be a powerful tool that can help:

Detect genetic variations

Lead to personalized screening options

Address your cancer risk and learn effective strategies to find cancer early when it's most treatable

Guide the screening process for all family members, ensuring that it is regular and timely

Understand the chances of passing genetic variations on to children

If you have concerns about your personal cancer risk or your family history of cancer, talk to a physician or genetic counselor, visit [MDAnderson.org/FamilyHistory](https://www.mdanderson.org/FamilyHistory) online or call **askMDAnderson** at 713-745-8040 or 1-888-886-8957.

If you have questions about In the Spirit of Health, e-mail Community@MDAnderson.org or call **713-792-3363**.

Know your family's cancer history

This family chart can help your health provider better understand your cancer risk.

You can also write down your family's history of other diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease or stroke.



Family member name	Cancer	Cancer type and/or other diseases	Age at diagnosis
Grandparents			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
Parents			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
Siblings			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		

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