

Why Should I Have Genetic Counseling for Cancer?

Expertise

Genetic counselors are specialized health care professionals trained to carefully organize and analyze detailed information about your family history of cancer. Based on this analysis, the genetic counselor can give you a personalized assessment and discuss all of the testing options available to you. The genetic counselor will help your doctor use your test results to optimize your cancer screening and care.

What you learn may surprise you

After meeting with a genetic counselor, you may be offered a different genetic test than you were expecting, or you may learn that your risk for hereditary cancer is lower or higher than you thought. You may find out that it would be more informative to test a different relative first. Cancer screening options 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 and your family 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 answer your questions about the range of different testing options based on 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 possible.

Interpretation of results

Not all genetic information is clear-cut. Many times, genetic test results do not answer the question of what is causing cancer in a family. In addition, the findings from a genetic test can sometimes be unclear. Genetic counselors are experts in interpreting genetic testing information so that it is relevant to you and your family.

Support and resources

Some people may wish to seek support related to their experience with cancer or genetic test results. In addition, it can be difficult to sort through information on the Internet, at the library, or from family members. A genetic counselor can locate useful resources for you and your family, and can help you work through the available information to find what is relevant to you.