

Commonly Asked Genetic Counseling Questions

Why have I been referred for genetic counseling?

- If you have cancer at a young age, such as breast or colon cancer before age 50.
- If more than one close family member has the same type of cancer or a related cancer. For example, breast and ovarian cancer are related cancers. Colon and uterine cancer are also related.
- If you have two or more cancer diagnoses.
- If you have a rare cancer or unusual tumors (such as medullary thyroid cancer, retinoblastoma, male breast cancer).
- If you have other features linked with an inherited cancer risk (such as multiple colon polyps).

What is an inherited cancer risk?

- Most cancers happen by chance in patients without a family history.
- 5-10 percent of all cancers are inherited or hereditary.
- Hereditary cancers are caused by a change in certain genes.
- Inherited cancer risks can affect BOTH men and women of all ages.
- These gene changes may increase a person's risk for developing one or more types of cancer. Not all people who inherit the changed gene will develop cancer.

What should I expect during my visit?

- Review of your family and medical history.
- Risk assessment.
- Explanation of genetic condition(s).
- Discussion of management, treatment, and testing options.
- Genetic testing, if indicated.
- Follow- up care.

If you are being seen in our clinic for the first time, your appointment will last 1 to 1 ½ hours. After this appointment a letter will be sent to your doctor sharing what we discussed during your visit.

What is the cost for the genetic consultation?

Our genetic consultation is free of charge.

What is the cost for the genetic testing?

The lab that does the genetic testing contacts our patients within 5 business days to tell them what the insurance will cover. They will tell you any out-of-pocket costs that you may have to pay. The lab has contracts with many of the insurance companies. Most of these insurance companies cover genetic testing, if your history suggests you would benefit from it.

Do I need to be worried about genetic discrimination?

You may have concerns about genetic discrimination. You may be concerned about health insurance, life insurance, employment and long-term disability. The Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act (GINA) prohibits the use of genetic information for discrimination in health insurance and employment. We will discuss these concerns at your appointment.

What do the genetic test results mean?

Positive results may mean that a person carries or has the condition or disease they are being tested for. Often this means a genetic variation has been identified. Having a genetic consultation prior to and after testing is helpful to learn the full meaning of the results.

Negative results may mean variations were not found. Some people may still have increased risk based on family history. This will be discussed at your appointment. Further testing may be needed.

Uncertain results may mean a variant of uncertain significance (VUS) was found. It is not clear if this variant is linked to the patient's cancer or family history. This will be discussed at your appointment.

A copy of your test results and a summary of your follow-up visit will be sent both to you and your referring provider.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact our genetic counseling assistant, Ashley, at 269-286-7195.