



Family Health History

genetics & health

Why is it important to know my Family Health History?

Certain health conditions are passed from generation to generation in families. Knowing which health conditions run in your family is important for you and your healthcare provider. This can help your provider understand and manage your health risks.

A family health history is a record of your family's health. It is recommended you collect information for three generations and on both sides of your family. Remember to share this information with your healthcare provider and update it annually.

Things to include when collecting Family Health History:

- Age at death
- Cause of death
- Medical conditions and diseases
- Age of disease diagnosis
- Regions or countries that family members came from (Ancestry)

Grandpa Michael

Example: **Age at death:** 72 years
Cause of death: Colon Cancer
Medical conditions, diseases and age of diagnosis: Colon Cancer (age 70); Diabetes (age 55); Hearing Loss (age 50)
Family Origin: England (mother's side) and Russia (father's side)

Where can I get more information about what my family health history means?

Based on your family health history, your healthcare provider may recommend you see a genetics expert such as a genetic counselor or medical geneticist. A genetics expert can help answer questions about health issues that are seen in your family.

People who have the following health issues in their family may find it helpful to meet with a genetics expert:

- Pregnancy and childbirth complications, including multiple miscarriages, still birth, or a child with a birth defect such as spina bifida, cleft palate or heart defect.
- Growth and development issues, including developmental delay, intellectual disability, short stature, or uneven growth.
- Known genetic conditions, including muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, hemophilia or any disease that seems to run in your family.
- Young age at diagnosis or death, including sudden death for unknown reasons or diagnosis of a disease at 50 years or younger such as cancer, diabetes, or heart problems.

Your Genetic Tree

Genetic services may help answer the following questions:

- How did this happen?
- Could this happen again?
- What are the chances that my children or I could have this?
- Where can we go for help?
- Is there a test to detect this early?
- How can I stay healthy?

What will happen with my genetic information?

There are laws that protect your privacy and prevent health insurers and employers from treating you differently based on your genetic information. Your genetic information will stay between you, your healthcare provider and the genetics expert you see.

How much does it cost to see a genetics expert?

Genetics clinics set their own fees. In some cases, insurance will cover the cost to see an expert. Some clinics may help you if you cannot afford the visit.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your primary care provider or a local genetics clinic for assistance. To find the nearest genetics clinic in Washington State call 253-395-6741 or visit

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/geneticclinics>

Try this free online tool to create your Family's Health Portrait!
www.familyhistory.hhs.gov

Or request a FREE booklet "A Guide to Family Health History"
from <http://www.genesinlife.org/orderFHH>

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats.
To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 711)

