

Hereditary cancer:

What's your risk?



Much can be learned from creating a family tree, especially if you include a family health history. Do you know that 10 percent of all diagnosed cancers are inherited? If your family has a history of cancer, you need to know your own risk.

What is hereditary cancer?

Hereditary cancer is caused by mutations (changes) in specific genes that are passed down from either parent. Genetically influenced cancers include breast, ovarian and colorectal cancers. If an alteration in the cancer-causing gene is identified within a family, there's a 50 percent chance that siblings and children will inherit that alteration.

If you have a strong personal or family history of cancer, genetic testing can help you learn whether or not you carry a gene responsible for these cancers. If you do, the information can help you and your physician formulate a healthcare plan to detect your cancer early—or, better yet, prevent it entirely.

To screen or not to screen?

You should consider genetic testing to screen for breast or ovarian cancers if you:

- Were diagnosed with breast cancer before age 45
- Were diagnosed with ovarian cancer at any age
- Have a blood relative with the altered BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene

- Have a male relative with breast cancer
- Have two or more blood relatives—on either your mother's or father's side—who had breast cancer before age 50 or ovarian cancer at any age
- Are of Ashkenazi or Eastern European Jewish descent

You should consider genetic testing for colorectal cancer if you:

- Have a personal or family history of colorectal or endometrial cancer diagnosed before age 50
- Have a personal or family history of multiple hereditary colorectal cancers in the same person (such as two colorectal cancers or both colorectal and endometrial cancer)
- Have two first-degree relatives (parents, siblings or children) who were diagnosed with colorectal or endometrial cancer at any age
- Have had more than five to 10 polyps removed

Northside Hospital's Hereditary Cancer Program

→ Our genetic counselors offer genetic counseling sessions, pre- and post-testing counseling and genetic testing.

If you're wondering if genetic testing is right for you or a family member, call (404) 851-6284 or visit northside.com.