

Know your Familial Risk for Cancer: Familial (Genetic) Testing



What is hereditary cancer?

Much like our eye color or male patterned baldness, we can also inherit genes that may lead to cancer. About 10% of all cancers are caused by inherited gene mutations.

All cancer is caused by genetic mutations. Mutations are changes that occur in cells that affect the way they grow and divide – and can be either hereditary or sporadic. Hereditary mutations are passed down from biological parents while sporadic mutations can occur through lifestyle habits and other exposures.

How can you tell if you have an inherited genetic mutation?

Genetic testing aims to identify inherited gene mutations that are known to increase a person's risk of developing cancer.

How will I know if I need to get tested for cancerous genetic mutations?

Your doctor or other healthcare provider can help you decide if it is right for you. Some criteria that may lead to genetic testing are:

- Cancer was diagnosed at an unusually young age (before 50)
- Several different types of cancer in the same person
- Several first-degree relatives (parents, siblings, or children) have the same type of cancer
- Unusual cases of a specific cancer type (for example, breast cancer in a man)
- Known genetic mutation in the family
- Several family members with cancer

Here are some next steps you can take right now to know your risk:

- Talk to your family about any relevant medical history
- Share information with your healthcare team
- Personal screening guidelines may change if you are at increased risk for a specific cancer

To learn more about genetic cancer risks and to schedule a screening scan the QR code or visit:
go.rutgers.edu/WhatsInThoseGenes



Sources:
<https://arizonaoncology.com/genetics/>
<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/genetics/genetic-testing-for-cancer-risk/understanding-genetic-testing-for-cancer.html>
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/genetics>



ScreenNJ is a statewide program carried out in partnership with Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Health, and healthcare and community organizations across the state.