



Family Medical History Checklist

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Introduction



During medical appointments, you may find your doctor asking about your health history. Providing a comprehensive medical history may tell your doctor what health issues you might be at risk for or help diagnose a current health issue. Your history provides important clues about your overall health. However, remembering both your and your family's extensive medical history on the spot can be stressful and difficult. This eBook will guide you through a medical history checklist to complete ahead of time and save for your next appointment. The goal of this checklist is to provide all necessary information for your doctor to provide proper care.

How to Gather Family Medical History

If possible, every adult should know his or her family health history. While you may already know some information about health conditions that have affected different family members, you should double-check these details. Find out even more from as many blood relatives as you can.

Who to Include in Your Medical History

Blood relatives, including but not limited to:

- Biological parents
- Maternal and paternal grandparents
- Siblings (including half-sisters and half-brothers)
- Biological parents' siblings (aunts and uncles)
- Biological children

Who Not to Include in Your Medical History

Anyone who is not a blood relative, including but not limited to:

- Spouse (unless discussing fertility)
- Adoptive parents
- Adopted children
- Adopted siblings
- Step-children or step-siblings
- Relatives who married into the family

If You're Adopted

If you were adopted, you may not know your birth parents' health history. Rules can vary by state, but you may be able to access details about their medical history once becoming an adult. You can find this information through your state's child welfare agency or the department that assists with adoptions.

Regardless, your own medical history is still key in helping doctors deliver care and support your health goals.

How to Ask About Medical History

To get started, ask your relatives about your family health history. It is important to reassure them that you are not trying to be nosy, but rather trying to gather details that could keep you and your other family members healthy. You can even offer to share what you learn throughout the process, so everyone can benefit from understanding your family's medical history. You can also let them know that they will not be identified by name when you share this information with your doctor.

Medical History Checklist

[Click here](#) to view the Medical History Checklist

There are two checklists—one for your personal health information and one for your family's health information.

How Medical History Can Impact Breast Cancer

Cancers

It is important to record as many details in your blood relatives' medical history as possible, including all types of cancers, which can influence your risk factors. The following are the top types of cancers affecting men and women.

Top 10 Cancers in Women

1. Breast
2. Colon (Colorectal)
3. Lung
4. Cervical
5. Thyroid
6. Endometrial
7. Stomach
8. Ovarian
9. Liver
10. Lymphoma

Top 10 Cancers in Men

1. Lung
2. Prostate
3. Colon
4. Stomach
5. Liver
6. Bladder
7. Esophageal
8. Lymphoma
9. Kidney
10. Leukemia

Breast Cancer Genetic Predisposition

Most cases of breast cancer are not caused by inherited genetic factors.

However, in hereditary breast cancer, cancer risk is inherited depending on the gene involved. For example, mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes are inherited. It is important to note that people with BRCA 1 or BRCA2 mutations inherit an increased risk of developing cancer, not the disease itself.

BRCA1 and BRCA2 Genetic Mutations

Everyone has BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. Although breast cancer is more common in women than in men, a mutated BRCA gene can be inherited from your mother or father. Therefore, it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of your family's medical history—from both your mother's side and father's side.

The function of the BRCA genes is to repair cell damage and keep breast, ovarian, and other cells growing normally. When these genes contain mutations that are passed from generation to generation, they don't function normally and cancer risks increase.

Women who are diagnosed with breast cancer and have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation often have a family history of breast, ovarian, and/or other cancers.

While BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations increase your odds of developing breast cancer, your odds of having either mutation are small. An estimated 0.25% of the general population carries a mutated BRCA gene, or about 1 in every 400 people.

Considering Genetic Testing

You are more likely to have a genetic mutation linked to breast cancer and should consider genetic testing if:

- You have blood relatives (grandmothers, mother, sisters, aunts) on either your mother's or father's side of the family who had breast cancer diagnosed before age 50.
- There is both breast and ovarian cancer on the same side of the family or in a single individual.
- You have a relative(s) with triple-negative breast cancer.
- There are other cancers in your family in addition to breast, such as prostate, melanoma, pancreatic, stomach, uterine, thyroid, colon, and/or sarcoma.
- Women in your family have had cancer in both breasts.
- You are of Ashkenazi Jewish (Eastern European) heritage.
- You are Black and have been diagnosed with breast cancer at age 35 or younger.
- A man in your family has had breast cancer.
- There is a known abnormal breast cancer gene in your family.

It is important to remember that if one family member has a genetic mutation linked to breast cancer, it does not mean that all family members will have the same genetic mutation, but it does mean they have a higher risk.

For more information on BRCA1, BRCA2, or other gene mutations that may lead to a risk of breast cancer, [click here](#).

Appendix

To download or save a copy of the medical history checklist, [click here](#).

References

<https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/what-is-my-medical-history#1>

<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/breast-cancer/#inheritance>

<https://www.breastcancer.org/risk/factors/genetics>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/brca-gene-test/about/pac-20384815>