



Family health history

What is Your Family medical history?^{1,2}

Does it run in the family?³

Your family health tree

References

What is Your Family medical history?^{1,2}

Family health history is a record of the diseases and health conditions in your family. Family members share their genes, as well as their environment, lifestyles and habits. Knowledge of your family's medical history is important for your health because it can help you and your health care providers identify whether you are at higher risk for certain health conditions, or even recommend ways to help lower your risk or screen for them.



Family health history can help your doctor decide what screening tests and other interventions you need and when. For example, if you have a parent, sibling, or child with breast cancer, your doctor might recommend that you start mammography screening earlier.

Does it run in the family?³

A good way to learn about your family health history is to ask questions. It can be helpful to discuss this at family gatherings often, family reunions, parties, or holidays. You can also check the family medical records or death certificates if possible.

Some questions you may ask can include:^{2,3}



Are there any chronic conditions that run in the family that I should know about? Any close relatives with a history of chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, or diabetes?



Did any of our close relatives get diagnosed with a disease at young age?



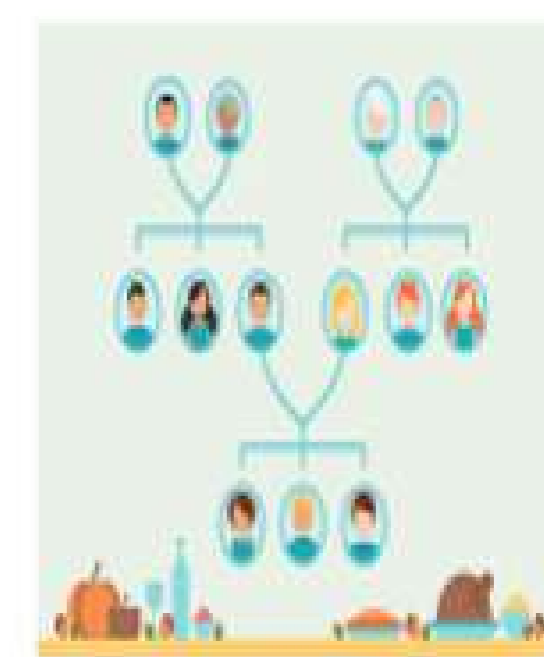
Do we have family health history information that I can share with my doctor?



What else should we know about our family health history?

Your family health tree

Check whether your family has existing family trees, charts, listings of family members. There are several ways to organize your family health history so that you can share it with your relatives or doctor. For example, record the names of your close relatives from both sides, and include conditions each family member has or had, and the age at which they were first diagnosed.^{2,3}



Another way to organize your family health history is to use an Internet-based tool created by The Surgeon General, called "My Family Health Portrait." This free tool can assemble your information and create a health-history report that only you can access. The site is private, and does not record, keep, or share your personal or family information. When complete, you simply download a document of your family health history that you can share with whomever you choose.^{2,4}



The format you use isn't as important as gathering the health-history information and sharing it with relatives and your health care team. It is important that you talk with your doctor about steps that you can take to lower your chances of getting the disease.^{1,2}

References

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