

# What is Genetic Counseling?

Genetic counseling is a process of providing information and support about genetics and inherited conditions to an individual or family. The goal of genetic counseling is to provide clear and clinically relevant information about genetic risk factors in a supportive and educational manner.

During a typical genetic counseling session patients will receive a cancer risk assessment, which is an evaluation of risk factors regarding family history and cancer. A genetic counselor will conduct the session and provide information about: 1) basic genetics 2) the likelihood of a cancer predisposition syndrome in a family and 3) genetic testing options. Patients also receive a general estimate of personal cancer risk and appropriate screening and prevention recommendations.

## Who are genetic counselors?

Genetic counselors are health professionals with graduate degrees and experience in the areas of medical genetics and counseling. Most counselors enter the field with a background in biology, genetics, nursing, psychology, public health, or social work.

## Should I consider having cancer genetic counseling?

You should consider seeing a genetic counselor for a cancer risk assessment if your personal and/or family history includes any of the following risk factors:

- Cancer before age 50
- One family member has two or more different cancers
- Two or more close family members have the same type of cancer
- Several generations of your family have the same or related type of cancer
- A family member of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry (Eastern or Central European) who has breast, ovarian or colorectal cancer
- Polyposis
- Rare cancers, such as sarcoma or male breast cancer
- Concern about developing cancer because of family history

If you are interested in having a cancer risk assessment, please contact the Clinical Cancer Genetics Program at (713) 745-7391, or toll-free (877) 900-8894.