

About your Genetic Counseling Session

- Come prepared! Ask your relatives if anybody has been diagnosed with cancer.
- Many individuals have genetic testing done the same day as their genetic counseling appointment. However, the purpose of the genetic counseling visit is to discuss the possibility and utility of such testing. The decision whether to have genetic testing is yours, and yours alone.
- Remember that Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Syndrome is a family affair. It is not something to be ashamed of. If you feel comfortable, speak with your family and allow them to be there with you and help you process all of this information in order to make the best choices and decisions for yourself and your family.
- Your health insurance will most likely cover the cost of your *BRCA* testing if you have a known mutation in the family or a significant personal or family history of breast or ovarian cancer. The genetic counselor will discuss the cost of testing at the time of your meeting.

To find a local genetic counselor, visit www.NSGC.org and click on the "Find a Genetic Counselor" box

To make an appointment with a cancer genetic counselor at **Montefiore Medical Center**, the clinical site for the *Program for Jewish Genetic Health*, call:

Phone: 718-405-8150



Should I See a Cancer Genetic Counselor?

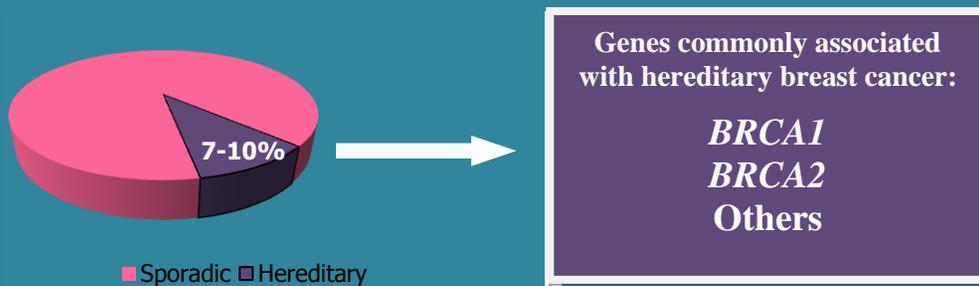
A Guide to Understanding if a Cancer Genetics Consultation is Right for You

PROGRAM FOR
JEWISH GENETIC HEALTH



How Common are Breast Cancer and Ovarian Cancer?

1 in 8 women will develop *breast* cancer over the course of their lives. 1 or 2 in 100 women will develop *ovarian* cancer. Most cases of breast and ovarian cancer are sporadic, that is they happen by chance. Only about 7-10% of cases are hereditary. What causes these hereditary forms of breast and ovarian cancer? A large proportion of such cases are caused by a mutation in the *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* gene. There also are other genes which can contribute to hereditary breast and ovarian cancer.



What are the *BRCA* Genes?

BRCA genes are genes whose typical function in the body is to protect against cancer. When these genes are altered or “mutated,” they cause an increased risk for breast and ovarian cancers as well as other cancers. Women who have cancer due to a mutation in *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* are said to have Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Syndrome. *BRCA* mutation testing is recommended for all individuals with a strong personal or family history of breast or ovarian cancer. With knowledge of carrier status, *BRCA* mutation carriers may take preventive measures to reduce their risk of developing cancer. *BRCA* carriers have a 50% risk of passing down their mutation to each of their children. Men also can be *BRCA* carriers.

When do we Suspect Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer?

Since there are familial implications for a hereditary form of breast or ovarian cancer in comparison to sporadic cancer, it is important to distinguish between the two types. The following is a list of risk factors for Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Syndrome:

- Early age at diagnosis (younger than 50 years old)
- 2 or more close relatives on the same side of the family who have been diagnosed with cancer
- An individual with multiple primary cancer diagnoses (as opposed to a metastatic cancer)
- Bilateral or multiple rare cancers
- The same or related cancer types running in the family (eg, breast and ovarian)
- Evidence of cancer susceptibility being passed down from parent to child

How do I know if I should see a genetic counselor?

Explore your own Personal and Family History

- Look for patterns. Are there many affected individuals? Were they diagnosed at a young age?

Are you Ashkenazi Jewish?

- Individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry have a **1 in 40** chance of having a cancer-predisposing mutation in their *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* genes (this is compared to the general population risk of mutation of 1 in 400 to 1 in 800). Even if you are not Ashkenazi, *BRCA* or other genes can be involved in hereditary predisposition to cancer.