



## How can I make an appointment?

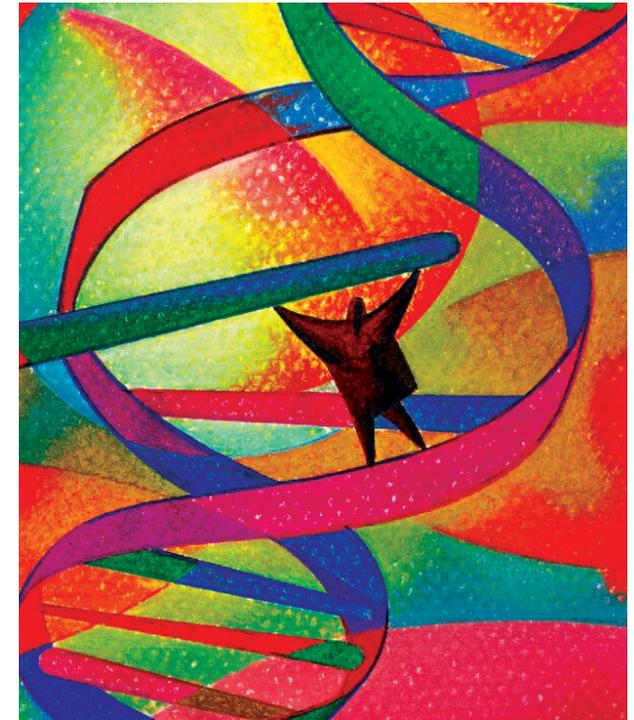
Genetic counselors are available to see patients at:

- Hartford Hospital: Hartford and Avon locations
- The Hospital of Central Connecticut
- MidState Medical Center
- Other Hartford HealthCare locations where physicians and nurse practitioners are specially trained to see patients for genetic counseling and testing.

If your physician thinks genetic testing might be right for you, he or she can make a referral by calling:

**Hartford HealthCare Cancer Connect line**  
**860.972.6000 or 1.855.255.6181**

They can also send a referral through the EPIC medical record system. A physician referral is necessary for a genetic counseling/testing visit, and our staff will help with that process. There is no charge for genetic counseling. Insurance and costs related to testing will be discussed at the time of the counseling visit.



*What you need to know ...*  
**If You're Considering  
Genetic Counseling  
and Testing for  
Hereditary Cancer**

*The Cancer Genetics Program*



## Why consider genetic counseling and testing?

If you have a strong family history of cancer, have had more than one cancer diagnosis, or have been diagnosed with cancer at a young age, you may wonder if it's "in the genes." Some cancers, for example, are triggered by a gene change known as a "pathogenic variant" that can be passed from a parent to a child and increase cancer risks. Genetic testing looks for these variants. Some cancers that may be associated with a genetic variant are breast and ovarian cancer, colon cancer and uterine cancer.

Hartford HealthCare's Cancer Genetics Program offers genetic counseling and testing to help identify adults who might carry a variant that puts them at risk of certain cancers. Our genetic counselors support patients in making choices about genetic testing and will discuss health recommendations based on test results. They are certified and licensed.

## Am I a candidate for genetic counseling and/or testing?

You may be eligible for genetic counseling and testing if you:

- Had cancer at a young age (<50 years)
- Have had two or more cancers
- Have or had certain less common cancers, like ovarian cancer
- Have a strong family history of certain types of cancer

## Our program begins with genetic counseling

When you meet with the genetic counselor, you will learn about how genes affect health, when testing is appropriate, and how you as an individual and your family might benefit from genetic testing. To help determine what genetic tests are right for you, the counselor will ask about your medical and family history, focusing on types of cancer and ages at diagnosis.

The counselor can then help guide you through the process, share results with you and your physician, and help you make decisions based on testing results.

## What does genetic testing involve?

Genetic testing may be done through a simple blood test or a saliva sample. When you have your initial meeting with the genetic counselor, the best type of test for you will be determined. Samples are submitted to special genetics laboratories and results are sent to the genetic counselor. The genetic counselor will call you to discuss results or you may come in for a visit to review them.



## What are your options if a gene variant is found?

If your test shows a genetic variant that can increase risk for certain cancers, the counselor will speak with you about options to reduce risk. These may include referral to specialists, intensive cancer screening, use of certain medications, or risk-reducing surgery. Your doctor will also be informed of your results and you should discuss them with your doctor.

If you have already been diagnosed with cancer, knowing whether a genetic variant has played a role may help you decide about treatments for your cancer. It will also help your family members to make decisions about understanding their own risks for developing cancer.

## How does a genetic change occur?

In families with a history of cancer, genetic testing may help identify a change in a person's genetic "code" that might influence the risk of developing certain cancers. We all have about 20,000 pairs of genes that determine our physical traits as well as how our bodies work; some of these genes are related to cancer risk. Most women face a lifetime risk of breast cancer of around 12 percent; however a woman (or man) who has a damaged gene related to breast cancer may have higher cancer risks. Knowing about a genetic variant can help provide guidance for screening and cancer risk reduction options as well as treatments for certain cancers.