

Family risk of breast or ovarian cancers

What is it?

Around five percent of breast cancers and 15 percent of ovarian cancers are due to a family link. This means the person with cancer has a gene mutation from a blood relative. A mutation is a change or fault in the DNA of a gene. The gene mutations that increase the risk of breast and ovarian cancers are BRCA1 or BRCA2. If your blood relative has either of these genes, you have a one-in-two chance of having it.

If you have either of these genes, you have a higher cancer risk than someone who doesn't have the genes. But having one of these genes doesn't mean you will get cancer. Gene testing can help you learn if any of your blood relatives have a gene mutation. Your GP can talk to you about testing and checking for cancer symptoms.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will ask you about your family history and depending on your risk level they may refer you to a family cancer service for more advice if:

- You have an intermediate or high risk
- Someone in your family has a known gene mutation

Your GP may also discuss cancer screening and known ways to help prevent cancer, like:

- Moving every day
- Eating a healthy diet – reduce fat, eat more fruit and veggies, avoid or limit drinking
- Quitting smoking

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may see you each year to check your health and see if there are any changes to your risk factors. If you have a significantly increased risk, they may refer you to a family cancer clinic or specialist to further discuss your options.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- ☐ *What can I do to reduce my risk?*
- ☐ *Where can I learn more about gene testing?*
- ☐ *What is my risk level?*



What can I do?

If you are feeling worried about your cancer risk, talk to your GP. Your GP may refer you to a specialist who can discuss the benefits of gene testing. A counsellor can also help you decide if testing is right for you.

If testing shows you have a high risk, your GP will help you learn how to reduce your risk.

What supports are available?

The Liverpool Hospital Cancer Therapy Centre provides gene testing, support and access to support groups. Ask your GP to refer you.

Where can I learn more?

- **The Centre for Genetics Education** - Breast Cancer and Inherited Susceptibility: genetics.edu.au
- **Genetic Alliance** – A guide to family health history: geneticalliance.org