

The Benefits of Genetic Testing & Counseling For You & Your Family



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This pamphlet will explain:

- What genetic testing and genetic counseling are
- Who should get genetic counseling
- What happens during and after genetic counseling

What is Genetic Testing?

If you are pregnant or are thinking about having a baby, there are many tests available to you. These tests can check the health of you and your baby, and predict some health risks that you and your baby may face.

One type of test you can get is genetic testing, such as amniocentesis. Genetic testing can find out what your chances are of passing some genetic disorders to your baby.

What is Genetic Counseling?

Information about genetic tests and genetic disorders can be hard to understand. A genetic counseling visit can help you to understand:

- What genetic testing is
- Why genetic testing is important
- What types of genetic tests are available
- How to decide which genetic tests to choose
- What the test results mean

What is a Genetic Counselor?

A genetic counselor is a trained and certified health professional in medical genetics who will explain about genetic tests, test results and genetic disorders to you. A genetic counselor will work with your doctor to provide the best care for you.

“My husband and I look healthy so we’ll have a normal baby.” This is not true. A husband and wife can look healthy but they may carry abnormal *genes* for a genetic disorder. This genetic trait can be passed on to their baby, meaning their baby has a chance of getting the disorder.

“If I am not planning to have any more children, then I do not need genetic counseling.” This is not true. Genetic counseling can also provide information about a genetic condition that may affect you from birth through adulthood. Knowing this information may help you make decisions about your health care and how to be healthy.

Who Should Get Genetic Counseling?

You should consider genetic counseling if you answered “yes” to any of the following questions:

1. Are you pregnant or planning to be pregnant after age 35?
2. Did you get an abnormal result in your prenatal screening test or amniocentesis?
3. Do you have a parent or a close relative with an inherited disease or *birth defect*?
4. Do you have a child with mental retardation, an inherited disorder or birth defect?
5. Have you had two or more miscarriages, a stillbirth, or a baby that died very young?
6. Are you married to your first cousin or a close blood relative?

Words to Know

Birth defect: A physical or mental problem which is present in the baby at birth. It is a result of an abnormal gene or other causes such as injury, infection, etc.

Genes: They provide information on how our bodies grow and function. Genes are passed on from your parents and they can determine features such as height, eye color, and whether you’ll get certain genetic disorders.



Photo courtesy of March of Dimes

What Happens During a Genetic Counseling Visit?

- The genetic counselor will gather your information such as personal and family history, medical records and lab results.
- The genetic counselor will review your history and lab results, and order further tests and evaluations if necessary.
- The genetic counselor will explain the information, telling you more details about the genetic disorder, describing risks to your family members, and discussing reproductive options.
- The genetic counselor will provide support, offering information and knowledge to help you make a decision that is best for you and your family.
- The genetic counselor may also provide or arrange for emotional support as needed.

What Happens After Genetic Counseling?

You and your partner will decide what to do next based on the information the genetic counselor gives you.

The genetic counselor will suggest options for you and your partner, and will help you reach a decision that is best for you and your partner.

The genetic counselor can provide support for issues you may have related to genetic testing. Finally, the genetic counselor can refer you to other specialists for further help, such as special doctors, social workers, support groups, or mental health professionals.



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If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this brochure, please call our health educators at (212) 966-0228 ext. 132

如果你對本小冊子的內容有任何問題，請和我們的健康教育員聯系。

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