Genetic Counseling

Genetic counseling can help individuals and families better understand their genetic risks for cancer and the available options for genetic testing, cancer screening, and cancer prevention. Genetic testing may not be appropriate for everyone, and genetic evaluation can determine if such testing is right for you.

Hereditary Cancer

Cancer is a common disease with complex causes, many of which are not completely understood. Recent advances in cancer genetics have led to the identification of genes that, when altered, cause a significantly increased risk for certain cancers. Although most cases of cancer are not due to single, inherited gene alterations, a small percentage of cancers are hereditary.

Some of the features of hereditary cancer include:

- Cancer occurring at younger ages than usual
- Several relatives with the same or related cancers
- More than one type of cancer in the same individual
- Individuals with rare cancers, such as male breast cancer

Genetic evaluation includes:

- Assessment of an individual’s personal and family histories of cancer
- Education about cancer genetics and cancer risk
- Guidance as to whether genetic testing is available and appropriate.
- Discussion of the risks, benefits, implications, and limitations of genetic testing for hereditary cancer
- Coordination and interpretation of genetic testing if appropriate
- Discussion of cancer screening, prevention, and other risk-reducing options
- Emotional support for what can be a difficult and confusing time

Am I a good candidate for hereditary cancer risk assessment?

If your family history has features of a hereditary cancer syndrome, or you are concerned about your personal/family history of cancer, you may benefit from a genetic evaluation.

ERLANGER GENETIC COUNSELING & TESTING SERVICES

Located at Erlanger East Hospital
1635 Gunbarrel Road, Suite 300
Chattanooga, TN 37421
423-778-6357

RESOURCES & SUPPORT
Who are Genetic Counselors?
Genetics counselors are healthcare professionals with specialized degrees and experience in medical genetics and counseling. Unique to the Chattanooga region, Erlanger has a board-certified medical geneticist and a licensed, board-certified genetic counselor who works directly with patients who have or are concerned about a family history of cancer.

What Should I Expect During a Genetic Counseling Session?

- At your initial consultation, we will obtain your personal medical and family health histories and draw a detailed family tree (pedigree).
- You will be given background information on cancer, cancer genetics, risks, and related topics.
- We will discuss strategies and options for cancer screening and risk reduction.
- We will discuss genetic testing for hereditary cancer, including the available options, benefits, limitations, risks, and implications, and will help determine if testing is right for you.
- If you chose to undergo genetic testing, a small amount of blood or saliva will be collected and sent to the laboratory.
- When the results of genetic testing are available, we will discuss what these results mean for you and your family.

What Information Will I Need for an Evaluation?
To ensure an accurate cancer risk evaluation, we will ask you to collect family history information prior to your appointment. Important information includes:

- Who in the family has been diagnosed with cancer and how they are related to you.
- Where their cancer(s) started (e.g. breasts, colon), what type, and if it was present on both sides (for example, in both breasts).
- How old they were when diagnosed with cancer (for each different cancer).
- Pathology records for those who have had cancer (if possible to obtain).
- Whether anyone in the family has undergone genetic testing
- Genetic test results for any family member who has already had genetic testing.