



Is prostate cancer genetic?

Prostate cancer is unfortunately a relatively common disease, with 1 in 9 men diagnosed in their lifetime. Most of the time, cancer is caused by chance. Sometimes multiple factors play a role. In some families, cancer is caused by a single genetic factor that puts a man at a higher risk, called a hereditary predisposition.

“What does my prostate cancer diagnosis mean for my family members and their chance to develop cancer?”

Even though prostate cancer is quite common amongst men, most of these cancers are not considered to be hereditary. For those families that are found to have a hereditary cause, genetic testing allows for family members to be tested to see if they have a higher risk to develop cancer. No gene confers a guarantee that someone *will* go on to develop cancer. Men who have a family history of prostate cancer are still at an increased risk to develop this type of cancer even without an identified gene. Those family members that are at a higher risk of cancer can develop a personalized screening and cancer prevention plan with their doctors to help keep them healthy.

“Does my doctor need to know if my prostate cancer is genetic?”

We know that prostate cancer that is hereditary behaves differently than sporadic prostate cancer. If a man is found to carry a gene that strongly contributed his cancer, his doctors may discuss additional treatment options available to him to treat or stabilize the disease. This may be particularly important in men who have metastatic prostate cancer (cancer that has spread outside of the prostate to the bone or other organs).

“Do only my sons need to worry about hereditary prostate cancer?”

While sisters and daughters would not be at an increased risk for prostate cancer, many of the genes that cause prostate cancer in men (such as [BRCA1](#) and [BRCA2](#)) are linked to higher risk of [breast cancer](#) or [ovarian cancer](#) in women. By testing for these genes, women can better protect themselves from these cancers.

“How can I learn more?”

Speaking with a genetic counselor is a great way to learn about hereditary prostate cancer. Genetic counseling involves a discussion about your cancer history and your [family health history](#) to assess the likelihood that there is a strongly hereditary contributor to



cancer. A genetic counselor can also coordinate genetic testing for genes linked to hereditary prostate cancer. Whether you decide to have genetic testing or not, a genetic counselor can always help to counsel you and your family members about their chance to develop cancer.... and most importantly what they can do about it.

Click [here](#) to learn more about scheduling a genetic counseling appointment for questions about hereditary cancer predisposition.