



Asthma and Family Health History



What is Asthma?

Asthma is a lifelong, or chronic, breathing problem caused by swelling of the airways in the lungs. It can't be cured but it can be prevented and controlled. When you have asthma your airways are sensitive and may react to many things called "triggers". People who have asthma may wheeze, cough or complain of a "tight" feeling in their chest. Asthma is a serious disease, and can lead to death if not treated properly.

Why is Family History Important?

Asthma tends to run in families. Family history is one factor that is often overlooked. Asthma is caused by many different genes that you inherit from your parents, interacting with the environment. Other important risk factors include allergies, respiratory infections, and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Studies show:

- Over half of children who are diagnosed with asthma have a family history of asthma
- A person's risk of developing asthma is higher if he/she has a parent and a sibling with asthma.

What Can You Do?

KNOW your family history. Talk to your relatives and find out if anyone has or has had asthma. Even though you can't change your family history, there are steps you can take that may prevent the disease or reduce its severity.

If you have a family history of asthma:

- Tell your health care provider if you have allergies or trouble breathing
- Protect your lungs—be tobacco free and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke
- Watch for warning signs in you children (such as wheezing or complaints of tightness in their chest)
- Be aware of common asthma triggers
 - ◇ Chemicals
 - ◇ Cockroaches and other insect pests
 - ◇ Pollen and mold
 - ◇ Weather
 - ◇ Pets and other animals
 - ◇ Exercising too hard (this varies with each person)
 - ◇ Colds or flu

Asthma can't always be prevented, but if detected early, there are many new and effective treatments. **If you have been diagnosed with asthma**, share your health history with your family members. Encourage them to make healthy lifestyle choices that protect their lungs and help reduce their risk of asthma.

For More Information

Asthma Initiative of Michigan
www.getastmahelp.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America—
Michigan Chapter
www.aafamich.org



American Lung Association
www.lungusa.org



Cancer and Family Health History



What is Cancer?

Cancer is a disease that occurs when cells in the body grow out of control. It can affect any organ tissue in the body. All cancers are caused by a change in one or more genes that control cell division. The cause of the change is not always known. Often it can be linked to exposures in the environment, like smoking. Sometimes, the change occurs in a gene that is passed down from parent to child. Most cancers are caused by a combination of factors that are not always well understood.

Why is Family History Important?

A tendency to develop cancer can run in families. Most cancers happen in people without a known family history but some kinds are inherited.

Look for these “red flags” in your family:

- ~ A family member diagnosed with cancer before 50 years of age
- ~ 3 or more relatives with cancer on one side of the family
- ~ 3 or more generations affected with cancer
- ~ Any family member diagnosed with 2 or more primary cancers (for example: breast and ovarian)
- ~ A male with breast cancer

What Can You Do?

KNOW your family history. Talk to your relatives and find out if anyone has had cancer. Even though you can't change your family history, there are steps you can take that may prevent or delay the onset of disease.

If you have a family history of cancer:

- ~ Tell your health care provider
- ~ Ask if you would benefit from a formal risk assessment and/or genetic counseling
- ~ Ask what screenings are recommended based on your age and family history, then be sure to get them done
- ~ Get more physical activity
- ~ Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day
- ~ Be tobacco free — almost one-third of cancer deaths in 2005 were tobacco related
- ~ Maintain a healthy weight
- ~ Protect your skin from the sun

Cancer cannot always be prevented, but if detected early, there are many new and effective treatments. **If you have been diagnosed with cancer**, share your health history with family members. Encourage them to follow through with screenings and make healthy lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of cancer.

For More Information



American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov/cancertopics
Live, online help from the National Cancer Institute
cissecure.nci.nih.gov/livehelp/welcome.asp

Michigan's Genetics Resource Center
www.MIGeneticsConnection.org



Heart Disease and Family Health History



What is Heart Disease?

Heart disease is any condition that affects how the heart works. Heart attacks, angina and clogged arteries are all forms of heart disease. Other important conditions causing heart disease are high blood pressure and diabetes. Heart disease is the number one cause of death in Michigan and the country. Even though heart disease is one of the most **preventable** chronic diseases, about 71 people in Michigan die of heart disease every day. Many factors, including genes, behavior and lifestyle affect the way your heart works.

Why is Family History Important?

Heart disease tends to run in families. Some kinds of heart disease are inherited and can be passed from parent to child.

Look for these "red flags" in your family:

- ♥ A heart attack or stroke before the age of 55 in a man or 65 in a woman
- ♥ High cholesterol
- ♥ High blood pressure
- ♥ Sudden unexplained death
- ♥ Diabetes
- ♥ Bypass surgery or stent



What Can You Do?

KNOW your family history. Talk to your relatives and find out if anyone has had signs of heart disease. Even though you can't change your family history, there are steps you can take that may prevent or delay the onset of disease.

If you have a family history of heart disease:

- ♥ Tell your health care provider
- ♥ Ask if you would benefit from a formal risk assessment and/or genetic counseling
- ♥ Ask what screenings are recommended, then be sure to get them done
- ♥ Know your cholesterol level
- ♥ Have your blood pressure checked regularly
- ♥ Get more physical activity
- ♥ Be tobacco free
- ♥ Take prescribed medications
- ♥ Have regular doctor visits

Heart disease can't always be prevented, but if detected early there are many new and effective treatments. **If you have been diagnosed with heart disease**, share your health history with family members. Encourage them to follow through with recommended screenings and make healthy lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of heart disease.

For More Information



American Heart Association
www.Americanheart.org

Michigan's Genetics Resources Center
www.MIGeneticsConnection.org

Michigan Department of Community Health
Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity
www.michigan.gov/cvh



Diabetes and Family Health History



What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic condition in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone needed to convert sugars and starches into energy for the body. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to kidney failure, heart disease, eye problems and nerve damage.

Why is Family History Important?

Diabetes tends to run in families. A person with a family history of diabetes is 2-4 times as likely to develop diabetes as someone without a family history. Your family's ancestry is also important. African American, Hispanic, and Native American families have a higher risk of diabetes.

Look for these "red flags" in your family:

- ◆ Many affected family members
- ◆ A brother or sister with diabetes
- ◆ One or both parents with diabetes

There are also other risk factors. Look for these "red flags" in your personal history:

- ◆ Diabetes during pregnancy
- ◆ A baby who weighed 9 pounds or more at birth
- ◆ High blood pressure
- ◆ High cholesterol
- ◆ Overweight
- ◆ Too little physical activity

What Can You Do?

KNOW your family history. Talk to your relatives and find out if anyone has had diabetes. Even though you can't change your family history, there are steps you can take that may prevent or delay the onset of disease.

If you have a family history of diabetes:

- ◆ Tell your health care provider
- ◆ Ask what screenings are recommended, then be sure to get them done
- ◆ Maintain a healthy weight— if you are overweight or obese, losing just 5-7% of your body weight decreases your risk of diabetes by more than 50%!
- ◆ Get more physical activity
- ◆ Have regular doctor visits
- ◆ Choose a healthy diet— with at least 2 ½ cups of brightly colored vegetables and 2 cups of fruit a day

Diabetes cannot always be prevented, but if detected early, there are many new and effective treatments. **If you have been diagnosed with diabetes**, share your health history with family members. Encourage them to follow through with recommended screenings and make healthy lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of diabetes.

For More Information



American Diabetes Association
www.Diabetes.org

Michigan Diabetes Outreach Network
www.diabetesinmichigan.org

Michigan's Genetics Resource Center
www.MIGeneticsConnection.org



Family History and Your Health



Why is Family History Important?

Relatives share more than brown eyes or curly hair. Chronic illnesses and other health problems also tend to run in families. Family members share many of the same genes, lifestyles and environments—all the factors that work together to determine health.

Knowing your family's health history can give you important clues to unlock your past for a healthier future!



What Do You Look For?

Look for these “red flags” when asking about your family's health history:

- ◆ Cancer in 2 or more family members
- ◆ Heart attacks before the age of 55 in a man or 65 in a woman
- ◆ Sudden unexplained death under age 40
- ◆ Other chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or osteoporosis

Other important information:

- ◆ Ancestry (different ethnic groups have an increased risk of certain diseases)
- ◆ Age a family member was diagnosed with a condition
- ◆ Age and cause of death
- ◆ Number of family members affected

What Can You Do?

1 Talk about it....

- ◆ Let your family know that diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease can run in families
- ◆ Find out what conditions are in your family and how old people were when they were diagnosed and/or died

2 Write it down....

- ◆ Record your family's health history. Go to www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/ to download the U.S Surgeon General's family history form
- ◆ Update your information as changes occur
- ◆ Try to include information on at least 3 generations

3 Pass it on!

- ◆ Tell your health care provider about diseases in your family
- ◆ Ask whether you need to be screened
- ◆ Share the information with your children and others in your family

For More Information

Michigan's Genetics Resource Center
www.MIGeneticsConnection.org

Michigan Department of Community Health Genomics Program
1-866-852-1247 or email genetics@michigan.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/genomics.public.htm
(Click on Family History)



Genetic Alliance
www.geneticalliance.org

(Click on Genetic Resources, then Family History Tools)



Osteoporosis and Family Health History



What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes fragile bones. It progresses slowly through the years, often showing no symptoms. If osteoporosis is not prevented or treated, bones will break. Fractures of the hip, spine and wrist are most common. Over time, osteoporosis of the spine can lead to a hunched-over appearance.

Why is Family History Important?

A tendency to develop osteoporosis runs in families.

- ◆ About 45% of women and 30% of men with osteoporosis have other affected family members
- ◆ A sibling of someone with osteoporosis is six times more likely to have low bone mass
- ◆ Daughters and granddaughters of women with osteoporosis are at higher risk
- ◆ Postmenopausal Caucasian and Asian women are the highest risk groups

Look for these “red flags” in your family:

- ◆ Family history of fractures
- ◆ Broken bones from a minor fall or injury after age 35
- ◆ Adults with low body weight (under 127 pounds)

What Can You Do?

KNOW your family history. Talk to your relatives and find out if anyone has had osteoporosis or bone fractures. Even though you can't change your family history, there are steps you can take that may prevent or delay the onset of disease.

If you have a family history of osteoporosis:

- ◆ Tell your health care provider
- ◆ Ask what screenings are recommended, then be sure to get them done
- ◆ Get at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily
- ◆ Get your vitamin D—a nutrient that helps your body absorb needed calcium
- ◆ Maintain a healthy weight
- ◆ Get more physical activity—weight bearing exercise (like brisk walking or strength training) stimulates bone formation
- ◆ Be tobacco free
- ◆ Choose a healthy diet—with at least 2 ½ cups of brightly colored vegetables and 2 cups of fruit a day

Osteoporosis is preventable. If detected early, there are treatment options available. **If you have been diagnosed with osteoporosis**, share your health history with family members. Encourage them to follow through with recommended screenings and make healthy lifestyle choices to reduce their risk of osteoporosis.

For More Information

Partnership for Better Bones

www.michiganosteoporosisconnection.org



Bone Health Campaign

Powerful Bones. Powerful Girls.™

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bonehealth/