

Why is Family History Important?

Relatives share more than brown eyes or curly hair. Chronic illnesses and other health problems can also run in families. Family members share many of the same genes, lifestyles and environments, all of which can impact 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 three or more family members or cancer before age 50.
- Anyone with pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, or metastatic prostate cancer.
- A male with breast cancer.
- Heart attacks before the age of 55 in a man or 65 in a woman.
- Sudden unexplained death under age 40.
- Other long-term diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or osteoporosis.

Other important information:

- Ancestry (different ethnic groups have a higher risk of certain diseases).
- Age a family member was diagnosed with a condition.
- Cause of death and age of death.
- Number of family members affected.



What Can You Do?

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.

Write it down.

- Record your family's health history. Go to <http://bit.ly/2YOcyNy> to download the U.S. Surgeon General's family history form.
- Update your family history as changes happen.
- Try to include information on at least three generations.

Pass it on!

- Tell your health care provider about conditions in your family.
- Ask your health care provider if you need to be screened.
- Share the information with your children and others in your family.

For More Information

Michigan's Genetics Resource Center

Contact 866-852-1247 or genetics@michigan.gov
www.migrc.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/genomics/famhistory/index.htm

Cancer and Family History

www.Michigan.gov/HereditaryCancer

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