

The South Australian Familial Cancer Service

The South Australian Familial Cancer Service aims to increase the prevention and early detection of familial cancer in our community.

This is a state wide initiative of the:

- South Australian Department of Health
- Cancer Council SA.

It is comprised of the:

Familial Cancer Unit – the entry point to the Familial Cancer Service, it provides genetic counselling and testing for individuals and families.

Familial cancer education program – based at Cancer Council SA, it aims to raise awareness and knowledge about familial cancers and the Familial Cancer Service in the public and professional communities.

Laboratory services – provide genetic testing facilities.

Familial Cancer Unit

Women's & Children's Hospital
SA Pathology
72 King William Road
North Adelaide SA 5006

t 08 8161 6995

f 08 8161 7984

cywhs.famcancer@health.sa.gov.au

Useful contact

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

For information, advocacy, counselling and support services.

Cancer Council SA
202 Greenhill Road
Eastwood SA 5063

t 08 8291 4111

f 08 8291 4268

cc@cancersa.org.au

www.cancersa.org.au

Introducing the South Australian Familial Cancer Service



Why does cancer occur?

All of the cells in our body contain genetic instructions (or genes) which tell the cells what to do. As we get older, we gradually accumulate errors in our genetic instructions which can interfere with the way a cell functions. This is a normal phenomenon and it occurs in every cell of the body.

Cancer occurs when the accumulation of errors triggers a cell to begin to grow out of control. Most of these cancers occur in later life as the errors in our cells accumulate over time.

One in three people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime and the fact that several family members have cancer does not necessarily indicate a genetic predisposition.

What is familial cancer?

For a small number of families their chance of developing cancer is higher than the average population. This is because these families may have inherited a predisposition to develop cancer which increases their risk.

Cancers that run in the family because of an inherited genetic mutation are called familial cancers. They account for just a few percent (5 to 10%) of all cancers.

The following features are suggestive of familial cancer:

- a family member has cancer at an early age (less than 50 years)
- multiple cancers in a family member
- several family members have the same or related cancers.

What is genetic counselling for cancer?

Genetic counselling is about:

- giving you the most up to date information about familial cancers
- identifying family patterns of cancer which may be inherited
- addressing the emotional and social impact of the possible risk of developing cancer
- information about prevention and early detection strategies to maintain health
- identifying families for whom genetic testing is appropriate
- exploring the medical, social and emotional implications of genetic testing for the individual and the family
- discussion regarding insurance and employment issues in relation to genetic testing.

The purpose of genetic counselling is to help you make the best decisions for yourself.

How do I arrange an appointment?

You will need to discuss your family history with your doctor or specialist who can then refer you to our service.

After we have received a referral letter we will send you:

- a personal medical information sheet
- a family history form
- a consent form to allow us to access your medical records (if required)
- a pre-paid return envelope.

We will also ask you to nominate your preference for the place of your appointment.

After we receive your completed information we will review your personal and family history of cancer to see if an appointment is necessary.

On occasions the issues can be addressed in a letter, and we will write to you and your doctor with our conclusions about your family's history of cancer and our recommendations for your future care. If this is the case for you, we recommend that you have a follow-up appointment with your doctor to discuss any on-going care.

Most people will be posted an appointment time at the next available clinic. At your appointment you will meet with a Clinical Geneticist and a Genetic Counsellor. After your appointment, you and your doctor will be sent a letter summarising the issues discussed and the recommendations made. This ensures that your doctor is informed and can look after your long-term care.

This service is provided at no cost to you.

You are welcome to bring other members of your family to your appointment.

