

What is genetic counselling?

Genetic counselling for familial cancer 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 assist you in making the best decisions for yourself.

To find out more contact

Familial Cancer Unit
SA Clinical Genetics Service
Women's and Children's Hospital
72 King William Road
North Adelaide SA 5006
t 08 8161 6995
f 08 8161 7984
e Famcancer41300@health.sa.gov.au

Cancer Council SA
202 Greenhill Road
Eastwood SA 5063
t 08 8291 4111
e chl@cancersa.org.au
www.cancersa.org.au

For more information about family history and cancer risk visit http://www.cancersa.org.au/asp/familial_cancer.aspx, or call **Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20**.



Visiting a familial cancer clinic



**Cancer
in the
family**



For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call Cancer Council Helpline. This is a free and confidential service available Monday to Friday 8:30 am - 8:00 pm
202 Greenhill Road
Eastwood SA 5063
PO Box 929, Unley BC SA 5061
t 08 8291 4111
f 08 8291 4122
cc@cancersa.org.au
www.cancersa.org.au

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20
www.cancersa.org.au

Background

One in two Australians will develop cancer by aged 85. It is therefore not uncommon for several members of the same family to develop cancer, though in most cases the cancers will be unrelated.

However, for a small number of individuals, their family history suggests they may have inherited a genetic mutation in a cancer-related gene, which means their chance of developing cancer is much higher than the average population.

This brochure is for people with a family history of cancer to provide them with more information about visiting a familial cancer clinic.

When cancer runs in the family

While most cases of cancer are not due to an inherited mutation, there is a possibility that cancer may run in your family if on one side:

- there are several family members who have cancers of the same type
- there are several cases of rare cancers
- family members have developed cancer before the age of 50
- family members have developed more than one cancer (for example cancer in both breasts)
- a relative has been found to carry a genetic mutation that increases their risk of cancer

A small proportion of some cancers may demonstrate a familial tendency including:

- breast
- ovarian
- bowel
- endometrial
- kidney
- stomach
- brain
- thyroid
- retina (eye)

If your close relatives have had any of these cancers, your doctor can assess your family history, and if appropriate, refer you to a familial cancer clinic.

The role of a familial cancer clinic

Familial cancer clinics offer a range of services for people concerned about their risk of cancer due to a family history of the disease. Services include:

- assessing a person's risk of cancer
- genetic counselling and testing
- medical advice including information about early detection and prevention
- psychological support
- opportunities to participate in research.

Familial cancer clinics in South Australia are funded by the South Australian Department of Health. A visit to a familial cancer clinic is free of charge and all information is treated confidentially.

Referral to a familial cancer clinic

There are two ways to contact a familial cancer clinic:

- your doctor can refer you (preferred), or
- you can call a clinic directly to discuss an appointment.

Where are familial cancer clinics held in South Australia?

The Familial Cancer Unit (FCU) offers familial cancer clinics in South Australia. Clinics are held at most major public hospitals in Adelaide and in some country areas (Port Augusta and Mount Gambier).

What will happen?

After receiving your referral letter, the FCU will send you:

- an individual medical information sheet
- a family history form
- a consent form to enable the FCU to access your medical records (if required)
- a pre-paid return envelope.

The FCU will also ask for your preferred appointment location.

When the FCU receive your completed information, your personal and family history of cancer will be reviewed to see if an appointment is necessary.

On occasions the issues can be addressed by letter, and the FCU will write to you and your doctor with conclusions about your family's history of cancer and recommendations for your future care. If this is the case for you, it is recommended 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. This initial appointment will take about an hour and you may need further appointments.

After attending a familial cancer clinic you will receive a detailed letter about your appointment, including recommendations for follow-up care. A copy of the letter will also be sent to your nominated doctor. This ensures your doctor is informed and can manage your long-term care.

Who will I see?

You may see a genetic counsellor and/or a clinical geneticist at your appointment.

Will I be offered genetic testing?

Depending on your family history and circumstances, it may be possible to have a genetic test to find out if a genetic mutation can explain your family's experience of cancer. Genetic testing has its limitations and there are a number of ethical, financial, and technical considerations.

Genetic testing is only offered with pre- and post-test genetic counselling as the results may have significant implications for both the individual and other family members. It is important to discuss and understand the advantages and disadvantages of having a test.