

Why is a family history of cancer important?

A family history of cancer could mean that you or your family members have an increased chance of getting cancer. Knowing this is useful because:

- the chance of getting cancer can be reduced
- cancer can often be successfully treated if found early.

It is important for all family members to receive advice about:

- their chance of developing cancer
- steps to prevent cancer
- screening to find cancer early.

Where are familial cancer clinics held in South Australia?

The Familial Cancer Unit offers familial cancer clinics in South Australia. The Unit provides information, advice and testing for people and families who have an increased chance of developing cancer.

Familial cancer clinics are held at most major public hospitals in Adelaide and in some country areas (Port Augusta and Mount Gambier). They are free of charge for Australian residents. A referral from your doctor or specialist is needed.

To find out more contact

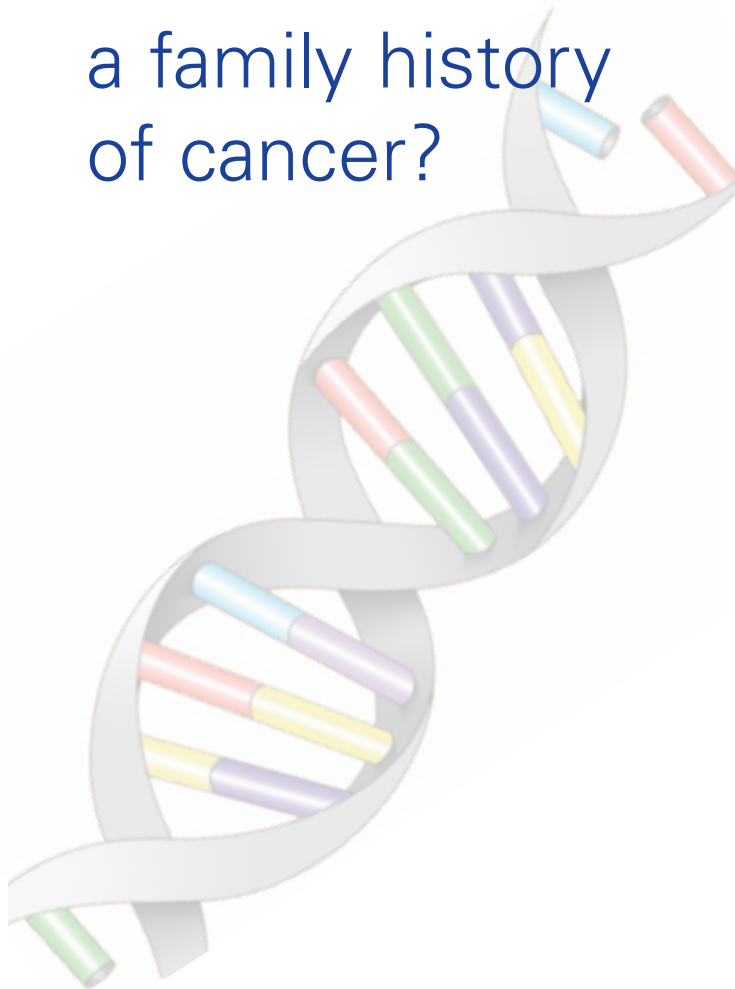
Familial Cancer Unit

Women's and 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

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

Cancer Council SA
202 Greenhill Road, Eastwood SA 5063
t 08 8291 4111
f 08 8291 4268
chl@cancersa.org.au

What if I have a family history of cancer?



Cancer in the family

Cancer is a common disease. Most people know someone in their family who has cancer. Sometimes there can be more than one family member who has cancer. This can happen for a number of reasons.

Cancer can occur in the family because:

- it is a disease of ageing and it can happen to anyone as they get older
- the family shares an unhealthy lifestyle (like smoking or too much sun)
- family members may have inherited an increased chance of getting cancer from their parents.

It is uncommon to inherit an increased chance of getting cancer from your parents. This inherited tendency to develop cancer is known as familial cancer.

What types of cancer can be familial?

Some common cancers such as lung, skin and cervical cancer are usually triggered by lifestyle factors and are **rarely** familial.

The common cancers that can sometimes be familial are:

- breast cancer
- bowel cancer
- ovarian cancer
- endometrial (uterine) cancer.

There are also some rare cancers that can be familial.

Is there cancer in your family?

Step 1: List the history of cancer in all your close blood relatives* on both sides of your family. If possible find out the age and type of cancer that each family member had.

* Your close blood relatives are not related by marriage and include your:

- parents
- grandparents
- brothers and sisters
- children
- grandchildren
- nieces and nephews
- aunts and uncles (excluding those related only by marriage).

Step 2: The clues that cancer may run in the family are:

- **2 or more close blood relatives on the same side of the family have had cancer**
- **cancer has occurred at an early age** (usually less than 50 years)
- **more than one cancer in a family member** (eg cancer in both breasts)
- **an unusual cancer** (eg breast cancer in a male).

Step 3: Talk to your doctor about your family history of cancer. Your doctor may refer you to a familial cancer clinic for a special appointment.

Over time your family history of cancer can change, so it is important to tell your doctor about any new cancer in your family members.

