

## **Do You Have Cancer in Your Family?**

### ***Cancer Genetic Counseling May Be Helpful to You***

Many people have at least one relative with cancer. Cancer is very common, but only 5-10% of people with cancer have an inherited cancer. Inherited refers to something that runs in families and may be passed down from parents to children. Genetic tests are available for some inherited cancers.

This may answer some common questions about genetic testing. A cancer genetics specialist can discuss these issues in more detail and address other concerns. Genetics specialists may include genetic counselors, geneticists, oncologists and advanced practice nurses with special training.

#### ☆ **Why are some cancers inherited?**

Inherited cancer is caused by a change or mutation in a gene. Genes are like recipes for the body and are the instructions our bodies use to grow and function. Genes are passed down from parents to children. Conditions caused by gene changes are also called genetic.

#### ☆ **Cancer is more likely to be inherited if:**

- Multiple individuals in a family have the same cancer
- Cancer is diagnosed at age 50 years of age or younger
- Cancer develops in paired organs (both breasts, both ovaries, both kidneys, etc)
- Multiple cancers occur in the same individual

#### ☆ **What is genetic testing?**

Genetic testing involves counseling and, if appropriate, blood is drawn. This is analyzed in a laboratory that looks for a change or mutation in the gene.

#### ☆ **Does everyone who is concerned about cancer need a genetic test?**

No. A specific test is not helpful for most people. A cancer genetics specialist can help you decide if testing could be appropriate for you.

#### ☆ **If a person has a genetic mutation, will he or she always develop cancer?**

Not always, but having a change in a gene makes cancer more likely.

#### ☆ **Will my insurance pay for genetic counseling and testing?**

Many insurance companies will cover counseling and testing that could improve a person's medical care. A referral from a primary care physician may be needed.