



Fighting Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer

# Worksheet for Sharing Cancer Information with the Family

Think about your own situation:

I am a cancer \_\_\_\_\_ (survivor/pre-vivor)

Cancer is on my \_\_\_\_\_ (father's/mother's/both/unsure) side of the family.

## Part A

With whom should I share results?

Who you should share your results with depends on which side of the family (mother's or father's side) the cancer risk came from. If the side of the family is not known, then it may be appropriate to share with both sides of the family.

## Part B

What to share?

Whether it's your family history or a genetic test result, how to find a genetic counselor, a request for a relative to consider testing in order to identify a mutation in your family, it helps to prepare what information you need to convey and what your message will be for each relative. Empower them with resources where they can go for credible and up-to-date information.

## Part C

### How to share?

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How you share results with your family will depend on many things. Whether you share by letter, telephone, or in person may be affected by personal factors such as your communication style, your family dynamics, and your relationship with each individual and may also be affected by geographic factors.

## Part D

### When to share?

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There is never a good time to learn that cancer runs in your family or that you might carry a hereditary predisposition to cancer. When considering the best time to tell a relative about hereditary cancer or genetic test result it's important to consider not just the impact of learning that cancer "runs in the family" but also the impact of not disclosing information as well. What if disclosure is delayed for the "right time" and they are diagnosed with cancer in the interim? Some family members already understand that they are at "high risk" for cancer. Sometimes learning that there is an identifiable mutation in the family, and that there is a way to learn if they inherited this mutation can be empowering. The possibility of a "true negative" may actually lower the stress for some relatives. Most genetics professional societies agree that unless the hereditary condition affects minors, that genetic testing should be delayed until adulthood.







## Part F

### Resources:

*The National Cancer Institute* has a list of cancer genetics specialists and risk assessment counselors. You can find a specialist in your area through their website at: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/genetics/directory> or by calling: (800) 4CANCER.

*The National Society of Genetic Counselors* has a list of board certified genetic counselors. You can find a counselor in your area through their website at: <http://www.nsgc.org>

*The United States Department of Health and Human Services* has a website with information on the Surgeon General's Family History Initiative. The site has Family Health Portrait tool for charting your family's medical history.  
<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>

*FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered* is the only international, nonprofit organization specifically for individuals and families affected by hereditary breast and ovarian cancer or hereditary cancer risk. You can visit their website at: <http://www.facingourrisk.org> or call their toll-free peer support helpline at 866-288-7475.

*Informed Medical Decisions* <http://www.informeddna.com> Informed Medical Decisions, Inc. is a nationwide-network of genetics experts available by telephone to help patients and providers harness the power of genetics to achieve the promise of personalized healthcare.



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