

# FORCE

Facing Our Risk of Cancer

# EMPOWERED

A nonprofit organization for women whose family history or genetic status puts them at high risk of getting ovarian and/or breast cancer, and for members of families in which this risk is present.

- Communicate with others via our message boards, on-line chats, toll-free helpline, and face-to-face meetings.
- Gather information and support.
- Learn more through expert reviewed articles on our information pages and in our quarterly newsletter.
- Locate specialists who can help you evaluate your risk and explore your options.

## FORCE

Facing Our Risk of  
Cancer Empowered, Inc.

A 501(c)3 Nonprofit Organization  
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To order more brochures, please visit  
[www.facingourrisk.org/order](http://www.facingourrisk.org/order)

All contributions are tax-deductible

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If Breast or  
Ovarian Cancer Runs  
In Your Family...

# ...IT MAY BE HEREDITARY

## WHAT is hereditary cancer?

Hereditary cancers occur because of a change (mutation) in certain genes that normally protect the body from developing cancer. This change increases a person's risk for one or more types of cancer and can be passed from generation to generation.

**Hereditary cancer risk can be passed down from the mother or the father to daughters and sons.**

The genes associated with hereditary breast and ovarian cancer are called BRCA1 and BRCA2. Families with one of these mutations may have multiple cases of these cancers.

Signs of a cancer-causing mutation include:

A family member with:

- ovarian or fallopian tube cancer at any age
- breast cancer at age 50 or younger
- breast cancer in both breasts at any age
- both breast and ovarian cancer
- male breast cancer

More than one relative on the same side of the family with any of these cancers:

- breast cancer
- ovarian or fallopian tube cancer
- prostate cancer
- pancreatic cancer

## WHAT is gene testing and how would it affect me?

A blood test can tell if a BRCA mutation runs in your family. The test should be performed first on the family member who is most likely to carry a mutation. In many cases, this is a person who has already had cancer.

If you test positive for a BRCA gene mutation, your lifetime risk for breast and ovarian cancer is very high.

**If you test positive for a gene mutation, there are options available for lowering your cancer risk and for detecting cancer at an earlier, more treatable stage.**

If you test positive for a BRCA mutation, each of your children and siblings has a 50% chance of carrying the mutation. Other relatives may also carry the mutation.

If you test negative for a BRCA mutation, your risk for breast and ovarian cancer will vary depending on other factors.

Gene testing results may change treatment and follow-up options for women who have had breast or ovarian cancer.

For the above reasons, it is important to speak first with an expert trained in cancer genetics if you are concerned that cancer may run in your family or you are interested in gene testing.

## WHERE can I learn more about hereditary cancer?

Experts in cancer genetics can help you understand hereditary cancer and provide you and your family with information about your cancer risk. They will:

- review your family medical history to assess and explain your risk for cancer
- discuss whether you are a candidate for gene testing and describe the benefits and limitations of testing.
- order the appropriate test if you choose to proceed with gene testing
- interpret gene test results and explain what they mean for you and your family
- discuss how to manage your cancer risk and refer you to experts for follow-up care

**If you would like to know if cancer runs in your family, please talk with a genetics expert about gene testing for a hereditary mutation!**

**To find an expert in your area, or to receive support and information visit**

**[www.facingourrisk.org](http://www.facingourrisk.org)**

**or call our peer support helpline at**

**866-288-7475**