

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.

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What Every Young Woman
With Breast Cancer
Should Know

BREAST CANCER IN YOUNG WOMEN MAY BE HEREDITARY

WHAT is hereditary cancer?

Breast cancer can result from changes in genes called “hereditary mutations.” These gene changes can be passed down from the mother or the father to daughters or sons and cause cancer to run in some families.

Women who develop breast cancer before age 50 are more likely to have one of these gene changes than women who develop breast cancer after age 50.

The genes most often associated with hereditary breast cancer are called BRCA1 and BRCA2. Changes in these genes can increase the risk for breast, ovarian, and other types of cancer.

If you have had breast cancer at age 50 or younger, you are more likely to have a BRCA mutation if you have:

- had ovarian cancer
- breast cancer in both breasts
- a relative with ovarian cancer at any age
- a relative with breast cancer at any age
- a relative with male breast cancer
- a relative with pancreatic cancer
- a relative with prostate cancer
- Eastern European Jewish (Ashkenazi Jewish) heritage

Women with “triple negative” breast cancer (one that is negative for estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors, and Her-2/neu status) may be more likely to have a BRCA1 mutation.

WHAT is gene testing and how would it affect me?

If you are a young woman who has been diagnosed with breast cancer, you can take a blood test to find out if you carry a BRCA gene mutation.

Cancer genetics experts include genetic counselors, risk assessment counselors, geneticists and other physicians with advanced training in genetics and hereditary disease. Before gene testing, you should talk with a genetics expert to learn if your cancer may have been caused by a BRCA mutation, and to help you and your family members decide if gene testing is right for you.

Learning that your breast cancer is hereditary may change treatment or follow-up recommendations.

If you test positive for a mutation, each of your children and siblings has a 50% chance of carrying the mutation. Aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins may carry the mutation, too.

If you test positive for a mutation, your risk for a second breast cancer and other cancers may be increased. If you test negative for these mutations, your risk for additional cancers depends on other factors. A genetics expert can help you better understand your risks for additional cancers.

There are options available for you and your family members to lower cancer risk and to detect cancer at an earlier, more curable stage.

The cost for gene testing can vary depending on which test is ordered. The cost is usually covered for young women diagnosed with breast cancer, either in part or in full, by insurance carriers.

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 are a young woman with breast cancer, please talk with a genetics expert and your doctor about gene testing for a hereditary mutation!

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

www.facingourrisk.org

or call our peer support helpline at

866-288-7475