

# My Family Health History



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**Or visit:**

[www.easylearngenetics.net](http://www.easylearngenetics.net)

**Educational materials provided by:**

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## What is a family health history?

A family health history is a record of your family's health. It contains information about your health and the health of your close relatives. If a parent, child, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin had a significant illness, then that information would be part of your family's health history.

## How can I learn about my family's health history?

Talk to family members about their health and whether they have had a serious medical condition or disease. Ask when the medical conditions were detected. Find out about the health of near relatives that have passed away. Did they have any medical conditions? What were their causes of death?

Family get-togethers or holidays—such as Thanksgiving—can be the perfect time to gather health information.

## What should I do with the health information?

Record your family's health information and update it yearly. Share your family health information with family members and your physician.

## Your family health history is important!

Family health histories may be an old-fashioned method of disease prevention and health maintenance, but they are definitely not outmoded. They are probably more valuable now than ever before.

*“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”*

—Benjamin Franklin

## Online Tools for Collecting Family Health History

Use the Genetic Alliance's Healthcare Provider Card to share your family health history with your healthcare provider: [geneticalliance.org/sites/default/files/HealthcareProviderCard.pdf](http://geneticalliance.org/sites/default/files/HealthcareProviderCard.pdf)

Bring the National Human Genome Research Institute's Family History Questionnaire to the next visit with your healthcare provider: [www.nchpeg.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=61:family-history-tool&Itemid=74](http://www.nchpeg.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61:family-history-tool&Itemid=74)

Enter your family's health information into the Surgeon General's My Family Health Portrait tool to share with family members or healthcare providers: [familyhistory.hhs.gov](http://familyhistory.hhs.gov)

Utilize the CDC's Healthware tool to input your family health history and assess your risk for certain diseases: [www.familyhealthware.com/#/](http://www.familyhealthware.com/#/)

## Why is it important to know my family health history?

Common medical conditions such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes often run in families.

Knowing your family health history and sharing that information with your physician can help you to plan for good health.

If a family member has a serious medical condition, it does not necessarily mean that you or anyone else in the family will also have that condition; but in some cases, genetic factors, shared environments, lifestyles and habits can predispose family members to an illness. It is best to be aware of the risks.

## How can knowing my family health history help lower my risk of disease?

You cannot change your genes, but you can change behaviors that affect your health, such as smoking, inactivity and poor eating habits.

People with a family history of a particular disease may have the most to gain from making lifestyle changes.