



My Family Health History



If you would like additional information, please contact:

**Illinois Department of Public Health
Genetics Program**
535 W. Jefferson St., 2nd Floor
Springfield, IL 62761
Phone: 217-785-8101
Fax: 217-557-5396
TTY (hearing impaired use only): 800-547-0466
www.idph.state.il.us/HealthWellness/genetics.htm

Or visit:

www.easylearngenetics.net

Educational materials provided by:



Center for Jewish Genetics
30 S. Wells St.
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312-357-4718
E-mail: jewishgeneticsctr@juf.org
www.jewishgenetics.org



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

—Benjamin Franklin

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.

Visit <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov> for more information about creating a family health history.

Family health histories are 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.

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.