

I'm concerned about my family history

One in two Australians will develop cancer by the age of 85. It is therefore not uncommon for several members of the same family to develop cancer, though in most cases the cancers will be unrelated.

However for a small number of individuals their family history suggests they may have inherited a genetic mutation in a cancer related gene, which means their chance of developing cancer is much higher than the average population.

When cancer runs in the family

While most cases of cancer are not due to an inherited mutation, there is a possibility that cancer may run in your family or on one side of your family if:

- there are several family members who have cancers of the same type
- there are several cases of rare cancers
- family members have developed cancer before the age of 50
- family members have developed more than one cancer (for example cancer in both breasts)
- a relative has been found to carry the genetic mutation that increases their risk of cancer.

A small proportion of some cancers may demonstrate a familial tendency including:

- breast
- ovarian
- bowel
- endometrial
- kidney
- stomach
- brain
- thyroid
- retina (eye).

If your close relatives have had any of these cancers your local doctor can assess your family history and, if appropriate, refer you to a familial cancer clinic.

Useful websites

SA Clinical Genetics Services-Family Cancer Unit
<http://www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/divisions/labs/geneticmed/>

Cancer Australia/ NBOCC (National Breast and Ovarian cancer Centre)
<http://canceraustralia.gov.au/clinical-best-practice/gynaecological-cancers/familial-risk-assessment-fra-boc/family-cancer-clinics>

MacMillan Cancer Support
<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Causesriskfactors/Genetics/Genetics.aspx>

National Cancer Institute (USA)
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/genetics>

[Diethylstilbestrol \(DES\) and Cancer](#) - DES was taken by some women in the 1950-70's to try and prevent miscarriage and other pregnancy complications. Although the majority of persons exposed to DES, during pregnancy or in utero, will not experience any negative health effects, available research findings indicate that exposure to DES increases the risk of some health problems including some cancers.

Want to know where this information comes from? Click [here](#).

Content printed from <https://www.cancersa.org.au/information/a-z-index/im-concerned-about-my-family-history>

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