Costs for genetic counseling and testing will vary with the complexity of the case and specific genetic testing that may be indicated. An estimate of the charges can be discussed during the initial phone interview.

Individual insurance policies vary widely with regard to coverage for genetic counseling and testing. It is always best to check your policy guidelines for coverage. Concerns about future insurance discrimination have prompted some people to pay for services themselves. Legislation prohibiting genetic discrimination exists and increasingly, people are availing themselves of insurance coverage for cancer genetic services.

Confidentiality

While all medical records are considered confidential, we have implemented the highest level security measures to protect documentation related to the Cancer Genetics Clinic services. Access to your reports are available only through the Cancer Genetics Clinic staff and Medical Records supervisors. This means that your consultations and test results will not be disclosed to other health providers unless you make specific arrangements to do so. Our reports are also protected from all levels of court ordered disclosure by a Certificate of Confidentiality issued by the National Institute of Health.
Is Cancer a Genetic Condition?
Cancer results from an accumulation of genetic changes within a cell that allow uncontrolled cell growth. In the vast majority of cancers, these changes are not inherited but occur after birth due to random biological events and exposure to certain environmental agents. Occasionally, families have a very strong cancer history suggesting that a major, inherited cancer predisposition gene is responsible. The most common inherited cancers include breast, ovarian and colon although other types exist.

Who Might Have a Genetic Cancer Predisposition?
The characteristics of genetic cancer families include an early age at diagnosis, bilateral tumors and multiple generations affected along the same family line. Indications for a Cancer Genetics Evaluation include:

Breast and Ovarian Cancer
- You or 2 close relatives had breast cancer diagnosed at age 50 or younger.
- You or a close relative had bilateral breast cancer, first diagnosed at age 50 or younger.
- You and 2 close relatives had ovarian cancer and/or breast cancer.
- Any male who has had breast cancer or a close relative of a male who has had breast cancer.
- You are Ashkenazi Jewish diagnosed with breast cancer when you were younger than age 50 OR have had ovarian cancer at any age.
- You have a close relative with an identified BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation.

Colorectal Cancer
- You had colon or uterine cancer diagnosed at age 45 or younger.
- You had 2 colon cancer or colon AND uterine cancer at any age.
- You have 2 close relatives with colon cancer; one diagnosed at 55 years old or younger.
- You have 3 close relatives with colorectal and/or uterine cancer at any age.
- You or a close relative have been clinically diagnosed with polyposis.

Other Cancer Syndromes
- You or your close relatives have a history of multiple primary tumors (particularly endocrine, bone or brain) at early ages.
- You have many relatives with cancers diagnosed at early ages (<50 years).

Who Should Consider Cancer Genetic Testing?
Individuals who have a reasonable likelihood of carrying a genetic change predisposing them to a higher cancer risk are offered available genetic tests. Genetic testing is recommended only after discussing the significance and implications of potential outcomes including finding a positive result, a negative result and an indeterminate result.

Patients who opt for testing should be confident that they understand the meaning of their test result and this should allow them to make more informed choices about their cancer risk management.

The Stanford Cancer Genetics Clinic
The Comprehensive Cancer Clinic at Stanford University Medical Center offers genetic counseling and genetic testing for individuals concerned about the risk of an inherited cancer predisposition. Our services include individualized cancer risk assessments based on medical and family history, detailed discussion of options for genetic testing and recommendations for preventive screening and treatments.

Our Clinic team includes genetic counselors, oncologists and geneticists. Genetic counseling involves a comprehensive personal risk analysis and education about the genetic mechanisms related to cancer. If indicated, genetic testing is offered, but only after the benefits, risks and limits of each test are carefully considered. Choosing if and when to test is ultimately a very personal decision. Our goals are to educate people about familial cancer, provide clear options for medical or surgical interventions, and enhance the quality of life for high risk cancer families.

What Does A Cancer Genetics Clinic Evaluation Involve?

Risk Assessment: Requires a complete family and personal medical history with appropriate documentation. We determine a person’s risk for cancer and for carrying a cancer predisposition gene using multiple databases and computer models.

Genetic Counseling: A multifaceted communication process which provides:
- Education about genetic susceptibility, risk assessment and genetic testing.
- Non-directive assistance with decision making.
- Support in identifying and coping with the psychological and social concerns related to an increased cancer risk.
- Discussion of the familial implications of hereditary cancers.

Genetic Testing: Clinically available genetic tests and/or participation in research studies are offered if appropriate.

Test Results: Those who choose genetic testing are scheduled for a second session to discuss results and plan management strategies. Genetic risks for other family members can be reassessed.

Risk Reduction: Surveillance and preventative treatments vary depending on personal medical history and the type of cancer in question. Options may include intensive monitoring, medications and surgery. Our Genetic Oncology specialists can discuss available options and recommendations for risk management based on personal and family history with or without genetic test results. If appropriate, participation in research protocols and clinical trials will be offered.

Psychological Support: Coping with the diagnosis of cancer or the potential risk of cancer is a major psychological challenge. Our specialized clinic allows us to appreciate the complex personal and family issues related to genetic cancer risks. Our staff can arrange referrals to professional counseling services and support groups.

Cancer Genetics Research and Education
The Cancer Genetics Clinic is one arm of the Program for Applied Cancer Genetics at Stanford. It is funded by the State of California Cancer Research Program to advance medical research and educational outreach in the area of cancer genetics. We may offer you opportunities to participate in research and/or education projects, however, your participation in these opportunities will never prejudice your medical care.