

What Should I Do If...

Understanding cancer risk can be confusing – Sharsheret is here to help! Please contact clinicalstaff@sharsheret.org to discuss these and any other questions you may have.

1. What should I do if I've discovered a family cancer history?

Gather as much information as you can, including which relatives have been diagnosed with what type of cancers, and their ages at the time of their diagnoses. Sharsheret's website includes a 'genetic family tree' template to help you gather the appropriate information. It can be found at <https://link.sharsheret.org/family-tree>. Speak with a knowledgeable doctor or genetic counselor, to discuss your personal risk, genetic screening options, and proactive behaviors to reduce your risks. Sharsheret's genetic counselor is available for virtual, free consultations.



2. What should I do if I am considering genetic screening?

What should I do if I am considering genetic screening? Gather your family's cancer history to help determine which screening(s) is needed, and how to access it. Your doctor or genetic counselor can provide a prescription and direct you to a lab to have blood drawn. Gene-specific screening may be appropriate if you have a known gene mutation in your family, but full panel screening may reveal different mutations that raise cancer risk (e.g., *BRCA1*, *BRCA2*, *ATM*, *CHEK2*, *PALB2*, and others). Please keep in mind that men also carry these mutations. If you choose to receive a screening blood test through a direct-to-consumer company, remember

ATM	BRCA1/2	that it may or may not include adequate testing for you; it may also need to be confirmed through medical-grade screening. Sharsheret's genetic counselor is available to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have.
CHEK2	PALB2	

3. What should I do if I am not sure whether I need a mammogram or other screening?

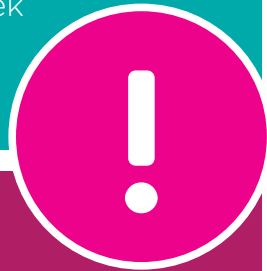
If you have symptoms or specific concerns, always visit the appropriate doctor; this might be an ob/gyn, primary care physician, urologist, oncologist, dermatologist or someone else. If you are asymptomatic, talk with your doctor about your family and personal cancer history, your age and your ancestry which may elevate your risk for certain cancers (e.g., Ashkenazi Jewish) – these factors will help determine when to begin appropriate cancer screenings. Discuss government guidelines with your doctor(s), but remember that they are just guidelines and they may not be appropriate for you. Bring a written list of your symptoms and questions and be sure to ask your questions and leave the appointment with a concrete follow up plan, making sure that you understand the doctors' recommendations regarding the next steps (e.g., reviewing educational resources, scheduling a screening such as a mammogram or a follow up appointment with a specialist or with the same doctor, or something else entirely.) If you are not comfortable with a doctor's recommendation, consider seeking a second opinion. Be a proactive patient!

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4. What should I do if I am nervous about moving forward with doctor's appointments or screenings?

Screening tests and appointments can be nerve-racking, especially if you are concerned about specific symptoms. Try to determine the specific source of your anxiety. Remember that knowledge is power and not knowing something about your health could prevent you from addressing any important issues in a timely fashion. Don't hesitate to seek support from one of Sharsheret's social workers. Fear or anxiety should not prevent you from caring for yourself.



5. What should I do if I want to be proactive about my health and work to reduce my cancer risk?

Women and men need to keep up with their own preventative care. Ensure you visit the appropriate doctor(s) annually, and create a screening plan that is specific to you. Screenings may include mammograms, sonograms, MRIs, colonoscopies, prostate exams, full body skin checks and more. Remember that genetic mutations can be associated with elevated risks for many cancers; BRCA mutations raise the risk of breast and ovarian cancers and also prostate cancer, pancreatic cancer, melanoma, and male breast cancer. Engage in healthy living behaviors. Work to eat well, move more, and reduce stress where possible. Finally, know the symptoms that require attention. Sharsheret has a list of common breast and ovarian cancer symptoms online and it can be downloaded here <https://link.sharsheret.org/signs-and-symptoms>.



SHARSHERET

Contact us today.

All Sharsheret programs, resources, and kits are **free** and **confidential**—callers are welcome to remain **anonymous**.

Together we can ensure that no woman or family has to face breast or ovarian cancer alone.

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