New Guide to Inform Cancer Patients on Genetic Testing

This free resource from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network explains how and why to access testing for multiple hereditary cancers.

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Today, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)—an alliance of leading cancer centers—published a new resource to inform people about the latest recommendations around hereditary and familial cancer risk. This essential guide is based on the latest evidence and expert consensus in the rapidly advancing field of cancer genetics. It provides guidance on how best to assess, and test for, inherited genetic mutations that can raise the risk of cancer, and presents this information in a straightforward, plainspoken manner.

“No other landscape in medicine has changed as drastically as the field of clinical genetics,” said Mary B. Daly, MD, PhD, FACP, Fox Chase Cancer Center; and Chair of the NCCN Guidelines Panel for Genetic/Familial High-Risk Assessment: Breast, Ovarian, Pancreatic, and Prostate. “The changes have been facilitated by the work of the Human Genome Project but have gone way beyond its scope. Advances in technology have been a major driver of the explosion of knowledge in genetics, now allowing us to sequence the entire human genome in a short period of time and at a fraction of the cost of previous years. This has led to a better understanding of the natural history of cancer, the ability to assess genetic risk for cancer across populations, the development of clinical management strategies to reduce cancer risk, the development of novel therapeutic agents which target genetic alterations, and to improved education of patients and providers about genetic risk.”



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The new NCCN Guidelines for Patients: Genetic Testing for Hereditary Breast, Ovarian, Pancreatic, and Prostate Cancer is available for free at NCCN.org/patients or via the NCCN Patient Guides for Cancer App thanks to support from the NCCN Foundation.

“NCCN brings together national experts in hereditary cancer to develop consensus guidelines based on the latest research,” said Susan Friedman, DVM, Executive Director, FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered, who serves as a patient advocate on the NCCN Guidelines Panel for Genetic/Familial High-Risk Assessment: Breast, Ovarian, Pancreatic, and Prostate. “FORCE and the entire hereditary cancer community rely on the NCCN Guidelines for the most up-to-date and relevant information. Hereditary cancer is hard enough to navigate, so we are thankful for patient-friendly information to help inform the decision-making process.”

“After our mother and aunt were both diagnosed with breast cancer, my sister and I sought genetic testing that revealed that all of us except my sister carried the BRCA2 mutation,” said Denise Portner, a breast cancer survivor and member of the NCCN Foundation Board of Directors. “Had I not known my genetic status, I would not have had the MRI screening that caught my breast cancer as early as it did. Genetic testing is a vital tool in enabling individuals to be proactive in their health care to achieve the best possible outcomes. Having a patient guide that explains the testing process, what clinicians test for, and who should seek testing is an invaluable resource.”

“It’s very important for everyone to understand their cancer risks based on their personal or family history since their personal risk level may necessitate earlier, more frequent, and/or more intensive cancer surveillance,” added Heather Hampel, MS, Certified Genetics Counselor, Associate Director, Division of Clinical Cancer Genomics Professor, Department of Medical Oncology & Therapeutics Research, City of Hope. “This is the best way to ensure that you are

doing everything you can to prevent cancer or catch it early when treatment has the best outcome. You can find a local cancer genetic counselor at findageneticcounselor.org if you would like a personalized cancer risk assessment. This often includes genetic testing to determine if you have a hereditary cancer susceptibility running in your family."

The library of NCCN Guidelines for Patients includes more than 70 free books in multiple languages, featuring easy-to-understand information about prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive care for nearly every type of cancer. They are based on the NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology (NCCN Guidelines)—which are continuously updated, evidence-based, expert consensus-driven recommendations that guide cancer care teams worldwide.

NCCN's patient guidelines have earned numerous awards as high-quality, trustworthy sources of patient education on cancer. They are widely recognized for their role in helping to empower people with cancer to make informed treatment decisions that are best for them. Visit NCCN.org/patientresources to learn more about all of the different resources for people with cancer and their caregivers available from NCCN and the NCCN Foundation.

To help support these guidelines, and other patient resources, visit NCCN.org/foundation.

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