

Collecting a family history

Importance of collecting patient family health history

A family health history (PDF) helps physicians and other health care practitioners provide better care for patients.

A properly collected family history can:

- Identify whether a patient has a higher risk for a disease.
- Help the health care practitioner recommend treatments or other options to reduce a patient's risk of disease.
- Provide early warning signs of disease.
- Help plan lifestyle changes to keep the patient well.

Types of information to be included in family history

A family history (PDF) is a lifetime record that patients should provide to all their new physicians when receiving health care.

The history should be detailed, including:

- First-, 2nd- and 3rd-degree relatives
- Age for all relatives (age at time of death for the deceased)
- Ethnicity (some genetic diseases are more common in certain ethnic groups)
- Presence of chronic diseases

Patients can access the “My Family Health Portrait” to:

- Enter their family health history.
- Learn about their risk for conditions that can run in families.
- Print their family health history to share with family or their health care provider.
- Save their family health history so they can update it over time.

Family history and prenatal/pediatric screening

Patient questionnaires (PDF) can provide useful material to physicians who want to gather information from a couple either prior to pregnancy or during a pregnancy.

Other questionnaires (PDF) can help the health care professional get the necessary history of a child in order to help with a diagnosis and treatment plan.

Watch "Family Health History Splainer"

From Geisinger Health System

Additional resources for patients

- National Human Genome Research Institute: Patients can find a listing of online tools for generating a family history.
- Disease InfoSearch: Patients can use this resource to learn more about the signs and symptoms of conditions, the latest research and how to access support.
- Genetics Home Reference: Patients can look up information about the effects of genetic variations on human health.