

ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN



NOVEMBER 2023

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

KNOW YOUR FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY



Nov. 23 is National Family Health History Day, and what better topic to bring up at Thanksgiving or other holiday family gathering than your shared health history.

Family health history is the record of the diseases and health conditions in your family. You and your family members likely share genes. You may also have behaviors in common, such as exercise habits and what you like to eat. You may live in the same area and encounter similar things in the environment, now or in the past. Family history includes all these factors, all of which can affect your health.

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Family health history information, even if incomplete, can help your doctor decide which screening tests you need and when those tests should start. You may also be a better candidate for certain types of preventative care.

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You may know a lot about your family health history or only a little. To get the complete picture, it can be helpful to use family gatherings as a time to talk to relatives about gaps in your knowledge. Collect information about your parents, siblings (whole and half), children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews. Include information on major medical conditions, causes of death, age at disease diagnosis, age at death, and ethnic background. If family members are no longer living, you may use legal records such as death certificates or medical records to help fill in those blanks. Be sure to update the information regularly and share what you've learned with your family and with your doctor.

Most people have a family health history of at least one chronic disease, such as diabetes, cancer, or heart disease. If you have a close family member with a chronic disease, you may be more likely to develop that disease yourself, especially if more than one close relative has (or had) the disease or a family member got the disease at a younger age than usual.

Even if you don't know all your family health history information, share what you do know with all your medical providers. Family health history information, even if incomplete, can help your doctor decide which screening tests you need and when those tests should start. You may also be a better candidate for certain types of preventative care.

Being aware of your family health history can also help you make healthy choices moving forward! You cannot change your genes, but you can change certain behaviors, such as smoking, activity level, and eating habits, and start participating in health screenings. Finding disease early can often mean better health in the long run, for you and your family members.

REFERENCE:

https://www.cdc.gov/genomics/famhistory/famhist_basics.htm



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Written by:

Katherine Jury, MS

Edited by: Alyssa Simms

Designed by: Rusty Manseau

Stock images:

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