

Just about every health condition has some genetic component.

Knowing your family health history and sharing it with your doctor can help identify what health issues might be important for you. It will allow your doctor to identify whether there is;

- a genetic condition in your family
- a cluster of people in your family with disorders such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease or cancer. When this occurs it may suggest you have an increased risk of developing these. Knowing this information may change the advice your doctor gives you about disease prevention.

Information that helps your doctor understand your family history includes physical and mental health conditions in your family members and the age at which these were diagnosed. The causes of any deaths in your family and age of deaths are also very important.

## Recording your family health history

Recording your family health history in a table format (see over page) can help your doctor draw a family tree, or pedigree, which can make it easier to see patterns.

Tips on recording your family health history;

- start with yourself then add your partner/s and your children
- add your brothers and sisters and their children, and then your parents and grandparents
- for everyone on your list, write their name, date of birth (or just the year of birth) and any significant illness
- include a date of diagnosis or age of death for anyone you know about
- talk to someone in your family who you feel comfortable with and find out what they know about aunts, uncles and cousins
- explain how this information is for the benefit of future generations
- record the date the pedigree was drawn, make a few copies and take one to your doctor for discussion and inclusion in your medical notes file.

## Sharing your family health information with your doctor

It is important to keep your doctor up to date. As you gather new information, add it to your table, record the date and share it with your doctor.

## Drawing your own family health history tree (Pedigree)

You might like to draw your own family tree. There are some standard symbols used as shown below. Start with yourself in the middle of the page and towards the bottom, this should give you room to extend to both sides of your family.

## Further information

If you would like more information on family health history, genetic conditions or genetic services, please call the Centre for Genetics Education on 9462 9599, or email us on [contact@genetics.edu.au](mailto:contact@genetics.edu.au). The Centre's website also contains information sheets about basic genetics and common genetic conditions. [www.genetics.edu.au](http://www.genetics.edu.au)

