Understanding Genetic Testing after a diagnosis of Ovarian Cancer

Genetic testing for ovarian cancer

Some women have inherited a fault in a gene that increases their risk of ovarian cancer and breast cancer. We can test for these faults.

Before you and your doctor decide on the initial OR follow-up treatment for your ovarian cancer, your doctor has asked you to consider genetic testing. This brochure is to help you understand more about this test and its purpose.

What is genetic testing for ovarian cancer?

Genetic testing for ovarian cancer is a blood test to:

- See if you have inherited a faulty breast/ovarian cancer protection gene (called BRCA1 or BRCA2)
  - That may have led to your ovarian cancer

    and
  - Means you have an increased risk of breast cancer in the future
- Help plan your treatment.

In women diagnosed with certain types of ovarian cancer under 70 years, those with certain ancestries and/or a family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer, the chance of detecting a faulty gene can be 10% or higher. Testing may help you to find out if you carry one of these faulty genes.

Why do genetic testing?

Testing to see if you have inherited a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene can be done at any time. The reason for considering this test now, however, is to try to give you and your doctor more information about:

- The best choice of medication to treat your ovarian cancer

  and

- Your potential eligibility for clinical trials that may be relevant to the management of your ovarian cancer.

Why should I consider this test?

Everyone has breast/ovarian cancer genes. Your age, type of ovarian cancer and/or family history, has alerted your doctor to the possibility that you may have been born with a change in one of your breast/ovarian cancer genes that made it faulty.

Despite this, inheriting a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene is still very uncommon.

How is the test done?

After discussion with your doctor

- A sample of blood is taken
- The result will take 4-6 weeks, and be given to you in person by your doctor
- If a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene is found or a variant in the gene that is of uncertain significance, an appointment with a genetics specialist is made to discuss the implications of the result for you and your family in detail.

What does it mean if a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene is NOT found in me?

If you do **not** have a family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer and a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene is **NOT** found, it is less likely that your ovarian cancer is due to an inherited faulty gene.

However, not all ovarian cancer genes have been discovered.

If you **do** have a strong family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer, you and your family may still be at increased risk of these cancers. In this case, an appointment with a genetics specialist will be offered to discuss a cancer risk assessment for your family, and recommendations for management of any possible increased cancer risk.

What does it mean if a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene IS found in me?

If a faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene **IS** found, it means:

- Your cancer may be best treated with a particular type of medication
- You have an increased risk of breast cancer
- Your blood relatives, if they want to, can have genetic testing to determine their risk for breast and ovarian cancer and if necessary, obtain advice on how to reduce their risk.

The thought of having an inherited faulty breast/ovarian cancer gene can be daunting. It is important to REMEMBER THAT THINGS CAN BE DONE to address any increased cancer risk for you and your family.

What can be done if I have inherited a faulty breast/ ovarian cancer gene?

Your doctor and a genetic specialist will go through all your options with you in detail, including regular screening of breast tissue, to try to detect a breast cancer early.

What about my family?

Our priority at this stage is you and the treatment of your ovarian cancer.

If you choose to be tested and a faulty breast/ ovarian cancer gene is found, the implications for your blood relatives will be addressed at an appointment with a genetics specialist at a time that is suitable for you.

Who can I contact?

For more information about Genetic Testing for Ovarian Cancer speak to your specialist

or contact

The Centre for Genetics Education

www.genetics.edu.au

Centre for Genetics Education

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