Is cancer hereditary?
Scientists have begun to identify inherited gene changes that predispose people to certain cancers. In fact, a gene change is inherited in approximately 5 – 10 percent of families with a history of cancer. While not all individuals who carry the gene change will develop cancer, their risk is significantly higher.

Who should consider having cancer genetic counseling?
If a personal and/or family history includes any of the following, genetic counseling should be considered:

- Cancer before the age of 50
- One family member having two or more different cancers
- Two or more immediate family members with the same type of cancer
- Several generations having the same or a related type of cancer
- A family member of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry (Eastern or Central European) who has breast, ovarian or colorectal cancer
- A family member with a rare cancer, such as male breast cancer
- Concern about developing cancer because of family history

What is genetic cancer risk counseling?
In genetic counseling, an individual’s personal and family history is reviewed to assess his or her risk for cancer. A cancer genetic counseling session at Advocate Christ Medical Center includes the following:

- Overall review of the role of genetics in cancer
- Discussion of an individual’s family/medical history
- Personal cancer risk assessment
- Discussion of appropriate screening tests and medical evaluations
- Discussion of available genetic testing, when appropriate, including the risks, benefits and limitations
- Arrangements for genetic testing
- Referrals to other specialists (e.g., oncologist, psychologist, surgeon)
What are the benefits of genetic counseling and genetic testing?
Awareness of increased cancer risk based on personal/family history or the results of genetic testing can motivate individuals to improve their health and quality of life. Genetic testing may:

- Identify one of the causes of cancer
- Identify other family members, such as children and siblings, who are at increased risk of cancer and may benefit from cancer screening
- Identify whether individuals and their family members are NOT at increased risk of cancer
- Help develop a cancer screening schedule that utilizes the appropriate screening and diagnostic tests, and is based on the latest genetic information
- Aid in decision-making about risk-reducing preventive surgery

What is genetic testing for cancer?
Genetic testing for cancer involves obtaining a small sample of blood to look for a change in the genetic material that may be associated with an increased risk for certain cancers.

The decision to pursue genetic testing is a very personal one. Our genetic counselors will assist individuals in making the choice that is right for them. All information discussed, including the results of genetic tests, will be kept confidential. No information is released without written consent.

For people who have a personal or family history of cancer, understanding and managing their risk for cancer is extremely important. The Advocate Christ Medical Center Genetics Cancer Risk Assessment Program offers hereditary cancer risk assessments, genetic counseling, and genetic testing, performed by our specially trained genetic counselors. We can provide the information needed to make medical decisions about how to manage the risk for cancer.

Our highly trained staff of certified and licensed genetic counselors:
Deborah Oleskowicz, MS, CGC
Cristina Ruiz, MS, CGC
Emily Bryant, MS, CGC

Location:
Genetics Cancer Risk Assessment Program
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