

Questions Your Children May Ask

You may want to think about some of these potential questions that your children may ask:

Will you/I be ok?

- We can't predict what will happen in the future, but we can do many things to keep ourselves as safe and healthy as possible - sunscreen and seatbelts are examples of this.
- We're learning as much as we can about our genetic mutation and planning ways to reduce our risk. In years to come, our scientists will probably know even more about ways to keep us healthy.

What is a gene?

- Our bodies are made up of millions of cells. In nearly every cell, we have tens of thousands of genes.
- Half of our genes come from our father and the other half from our mother.
- Genes carry the instructions that tell our bodies how to grow and how to work.
- Our genes affect what we look like, how we learn.
- Our genes affect our chances of getting certain diseases.
- A change in a gene is called a mutation.
- There are some mutations that cause a risk for certain types of cancer.

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What is the BRCA 1/2 mutation?

- This stands for Breast Cancer 1 and Breast Cancer 2.
- Mutations in BRCA 1/2 stop healthy genes from working correctly and can increase the risk of developing certain types of cancers.

How does the BRCA mutation affect me?

- It increases your risk of developing breast and ovarian, as well as other cancers.
- If you have tested positive for the gene mutation, you will have to think about risk reduction and screening.

Will you get cancer?

- Having the mutation does not guarantee that you will get cancer.
- I am part of regular screening to reduce this risk.
- My risk has been reduced because I had (or will have) surgery.

Is this why you had cancer?

- The BRCA mutation that I have has increased my risk and likely contributed to the cancer.

Why did you get the BRCA mutation?

- The gene has been passed down in your family
- The passing down of a gene is not anyone's fault

Will it go away?

- This is something you were born with and the BRCA mutation does not go away.

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- Although we cannot change the BRCA mutation, there are ways to manage the increased cancer risks.

When would I get tested?

- You can have genetic testing when you are 18 years of age or older.
- It is recommended that women consider genetic counselling around age 25 as screening can start this early.
- For men, genetic counselling can be considered at the time of family planning or closer to the age of 40, and if they have children who are 18 years or older.
- You may wish to speak with a genetic counselor to get more information.
- Everyone is different in terms of if or when they want to know this information.

Will my sibling/cousins get it?

- We don't know. Testing will help us find out

If I inherit the mutation, will I get cancer?

- Not everyone who has a BRCA mutation develops cancer.
- Having knowledge about the gene mutation can lead to choices for future risk reduction.

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I look like and act like you, does that mean I will get the BRCA mutation too?

- Genes for looks and body types are inherited separately from cancer risk genes.
- The only way to know if you have this gene mutation is through genetic testing.

What option did you choose to help manage your risk?

- I decided to get prophylactic oophorectomy and/or
- I decided to get a prophylactic double mastectomy
- I receive regular screening and monitoring
- I take medication to reduce my risks