Genetic Testing for Breast and Ovarian Cancer

Cancer can be a scary word. Often a diagnosis of cancer is met with shock, disbelief, and/or fear. As your health care provider, we strive to provide you with many types of medical interventions, including mammograms, clinical breast exams, and PAP smears, with a goal of preventing cancer or at the very least finding it at an early, more treatable, stage.

In addition to the services that we already recommend and provide, we have recently added a new service offering genetic testing for certain inherited cancer syndromes.

Often a patient will express concern about their family history of cancer. Luckily, most times this family history does not mean a significant increase risk of cancer for a patient. However, on some occasions, families may have a genetic cause for the cancer seen within the family, which means a significant increased risk of certain cancers for some family members. The good news is that if a genetic cause is identified, there are many things that a person can do to reduce their risk of cancer.

If you are interested in discussing genetic testing with your physician at your next appointment, your family and personal history can be assessed to see if you are at increased risk for an inherited cancer syndrome. One of the most important things that you can do to prepare for this assessment is know your family history. Ask your relatives about their diagnosis of cancer and write down the information that they give you, so that we can discuss this information at a future appointment.

There are some **"red flags"** in a family and/or personal history that indicate an increased risk of an inherited cancer syndrome, which include:

1. Breast, colon, or endometrial cancer diagnosed before the age of 50 years.
2. Ovarian or male breast cancer diagnosed at any age.
3. Diagnosis of two separate cancers in a single individual.
4. More than two family members diagnosed with the same type of cancer.
5. Ashkenazi Jewish descent with a diagnosis of breast or ovarian cancer.
6. A family member with a known genetic mutation associated with hereditary cancer syndrome.

If you feel that your personal or family history matches with any of the "red flags" listed above and you are interested in genetic testing, please contact our office so that an appointment can be arranged for you to discuss this option. During this appointment you will be provided with additional information about genetic testing, your risk of having an inherited cancer syndrome, and the medical options available based on the testing results.

If you wish to pursue the genetic testing, your blood sample will be sent to Myriad Genetics. When Myriad Genetics receives your sample, they will contact your insurance company to determine if the testing is covered under your health plan. You will then be notified by Myriad Genetics prior to testing and given the opportunity to decide if you would like to proceed.