

## Who can I contact to discuss if an appointment is right for me?

**Lauren Bokovitz, MS**  
Certified Genetic Counselor  
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Certified Genetic Counselor  
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You can also go to **NSGC.org** to learn more about genetic counseling and how genetic counselors can help you and your family.

# GENETIC COUNSELING

at

## West Cancer Center

[www.westcancercenter.org](http://www.westcancercenter.org)



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### What is Genetic Counseling?

Genetic counseling is the process of helping people understand how genetics can play a role in developing cancer. Certain families have hereditary cancer conditions that can be passed down through generations. A genetic counselor is a healthcare provider specially trained to evaluate your family history and determine if genetic testing would benefit you and your family members.

### Who should see a genetic counselor?

Talking to a genetic counselor may be helpful if you or your family member has had any of the following:

- Certain cancers diagnosed at a younger age (ex. breast, colon or uterine cancer diagnosed under age 50)
- Ovarian cancer diagnosed at any age
- 10 or more colon polyps
- Individual with two or more cancers
- Multiple relatives with different types of cancer (ex. breast and ovarian in one family, colon and uterine in one family)
- Rare cancers or tumors (for example, medullary thyroid cancer, pheochromocytoma, paraganglioma, etc.)
- Certain ethnic backgrounds (ex. Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry)

### What happens during the genetic counseling appointment?

A genetic counselor starts by reviewing your medical history and family history with you. You may be given a personalized risk assessment about your chance to have a genetic cancer condition. The genetic counselor will walk you through the testing process and highlight both the benefits and limitations of genetic testing. Genetic testing may not be helpful in all situations. Together, you and your genetic counselor can decide if genetic testing is right for you.

You will also learn how a positive or negative test result would change your medical management, as well as the

implications for other members of your family. Insurance topics such as coverage and genetic discrimination will also be discussed.

### How is genetic testing performed?

Genetic testing is performed using a blood sample and results are usually available in several weeks. If genetic testing is ordered, your genetic counselor will discuss your results with you personally and help you with any follow up.

### How can genetic counseling help me and my family?

Genetic counseling and genetic testing may help discover the cause of your cancer or the cancer(s) in your family. Sometimes, it can also tell you if you have an increased risk for cancers that are not running in your family.

If you have not had cancer, genetic counselors can help you to better understand your risk for cancer. This may include discussing extra screenings that may be beneficial in early detection and/or cancer prevention.

If you have a personal history of cancer, genetic testing can sometimes help with treatment decisions. It can also inform your family members about elevated cancer risks and the availability of increased screenings or preventative measures.

### How can I prepare for my appointment?

Researching your family history including types of cancer and ages at diagnosis will help the genetic counselor provide an accurate risk assessment. Sometimes, bringing a copy of a family member's pathology report can also help, particularly relating to colon polyps and kidney cancer.

If another family member has already had genetic testing, please bring a copy of those results, if possible.