

Where can you find genetics services?

Call one of the following centres for an appointment or ask your local doctor, specialist or health professional to refer you. You do not need a referral. Interpreters are available. All information will be treated confidentially.

Sydney and Newcastle Area

Camperdown

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
Molecular and Clinical Genetics Unit
Tel. (02) 9515 5080

Kogarah

St George Hospital
Clinical Genetics Service
Tel. (02) 9113 3635

Liverpool

Liverpool Hospital
Health Services Building
Department of Clinical Genetics
Tel. (02) 9828 4665

Newcastle

Hunter Genetics
Regional Medical Genetics Unit
Tel. (02) 4985 3100

Penrith

Nepean Hospital
Clinical Genetics Department
Tel.(02) 4734 3362

Randwick

The Sydney Children's Hospital
Department of Medical Genetics
Tel. (02) 9382 1704

St Leonards

Royal North Shore Hospital
Dept of Clinical Genetics
Tel. (02) 9926 6478

Westmead

The Children's Hospital at Westmead
Clinical Genetics Unit
Tel. (02) 9845 3273

New services are continually being developed. For information on services in other areas and newly developed services, please contact:

GENETICS SERVICES AND COUNSELLING

Why knowing about
your genes is important

The Centre for Genetics Education
PO Box 317
St Leonards NSW 1590
Tel. (02) 9926 7324
Fax. (02) 9906 7529
www.genetics.edu.au
contact@genetics.com.au

For further copies please contact:
Better Health Centre – Publications Warehouse
PO Box 672 Macquarie Hospital
North Ryde NSW BC 2113
Tel. (02) 9887 5450 Fax. (02) 9887 5452

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NSW Health website: www.health.nsw.gov.au

Genetic information is inherited from our parents through genes. A gene is like a small microchip of information which determines many characteristics about our appearance, height, growth, health and so on.

Inherited (genetic) conditions

Genetic conditions are problems in our development or health which result from a fault in one or more of our genes.

Many common health problems have some genetic basis. This means that they have a tendency to run in some families and may also be influenced by lifestyle. These conditions include heart disease, asthma and some forms of cancer.

Other genetic conditions are linked much more directly to inherited genes. They are present at birth and may develop regardless of lifestyle. Many of these conditions are relatively rare in the general population but may occur more frequently in some families. Some of these include Down syndrome, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, haemophilia, thalassaemia, Tay-Sachs disease and so on.

Genetic tests

Some genetic conditions do not become evident until adulthood. In many cases a faulty gene may be present, but you will never develop the condition.

For some conditions, tests are available to detect if you are carrying a faulty gene. These tests will help tell you if you or your children are at risk of developing the condition.

Some things you may be concerned about

- The chance that you will develop a condition affecting other family members
- Passing a condition on to your children
- The cause of a serious condition in a family member and the chance of it occurring in future children
- The diagnosis of a rare condition in your child
- Becoming parents when you are in your mid 30s or older
- Having a partner who is a close relative and you are planning a pregnancy
- A problem has been detected in your baby during pregnancy
- The effects of drugs, infections or other substances you have been exposed to during pregnancy
- You have had two or more miscarriages, a stillbirth or an early infant death.

In many cases the genetics service can reassure you that your risk of developing a condition, or passing it on to your children, is much less than you fear. Many conditions are not directly related to genes and are therefore unlikely to be inherited.

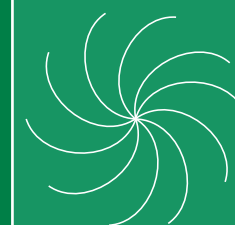
About genetics services

Since genetics is a rapidly advancing area of medicine, it is very important that people have accurate information.

A team of specialist health care workers at genetics services provide up to date information, support and counselling so that you can make informed decisions.

Depending on your needs, a member of the genetics team could:

- Take your family history
- Discuss and/or organise appropriate tests
- Inform you of the chance that you, other family members, or future children will be affected by a particular genetic condition
- Provide information and supportive counselling when a problem is found in your baby during pregnancy
- Provide information about the impact and range of effects you or your children may experience if there is a diagnosis of a genetic condition in the family
- Put you in touch with community resources and support groups
- Provide written information
- Provide follow-up consultations if necessary.



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important