

Talking with doctors

If you're talking to your doctor about genes, it's probably because of worries that you, or someone in your family, or someone that you care for, might have a genetic condition.

You might have a condition that seems to run in the family and you're thinking about having children and want to know: What are the risks of my child having it?

Your mother might have developed breast cancer and you're wondering: What does this mean for me? My sister? My daughter?

Or you may have just discovered your child has cystic fibrosis and you want to know everything.

These concerns are real. It can be very stressful wondering about what might or might not happen. You want to know where you can access accurate information, so that you avoid any misunderstandings or myths about genetics.

Whatever the situation, you will be able to deal with it better if you have more information. So consider the options available to you. You may want to:

- Work on a good relationship with a GP who can help you understand genetics
- Take someone with you when you see the doctor, especially another family member if possible
- Think about what you want to know before you go and write down a list of questions
- Talk to your doctor about what you understand about genetics – it helps your doctor enormously to find out what you know at the start
- Organise time for repeated visits – genetics can be quite complex and it may be difficult to sort everything out in one or two visits
- Read what you can – your doctor, local health department, genetics service, support group and genetics education counselling service, and local library can provide you with plenty of material to read
- Check out the internet, although it is best to stick to material that comes from reputable sources, such as hospitals, support groups, universities, genetics services and health services.

Contacts and further information

- Australasian Genetic Alliance at <http://www.australasiangeneticalliance.org.au>
- Well being: How to get the best treatment from your doctor, by Merylyn Walton (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2002)
- For other related fact sheets, you can contact the Gene Technology Information Service on **free call Australia-wide 1800 631 276** or email gtis-australia@unimelb.edu.au or visit Biotechnology Australia's website at <http://www.biotechnology.gov.au>