

# Hereditary Cancer Syndrome and its Associated Risk Factors

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## DESCRIPTION

A hereditary cancer syndrome is a term used to describe when a gene alteration that significantly raises the chance of developing cancer occurs in a family. It's crucial to realise that familial cancer syndrome is not the cause of every cancer that appears to run in families. It is typical for there to be several cancer cases in a family because around 1 in 3 Americans will acquire cancer at some point in their lifetime. Sometimes, cancer may be more prevalent in particular families due to shared risk-raising habits or exposures, like smoking, or due to other characteristics that may run in specific families, like obesity. However, a defective gene that is carried down through the generations occasionally causes cancer. Although these malignancies are sometimes referred to as hereditary cancers, the abnormal gene that can cause cancer, not the cancer itself, is what is inherited. Only 5% to 10% of all malignancies are known to have a significant genetic relationship (called a mutation) to a parent.

A familial cancer syndrome is more likely to be the root cause of malignancies in a family if certain conditions exist, such as:

- Several instances of the same cancer kind (especially if it is an uncommon or rare type of cancer).
- Cancers developing earlier than expected in life (like colon cancer in a 20-year-old).
- An individual having more than one form of cancer (like a woman with both breast and ovarian cancer).
- Tumours that spread to both of a pair of organs (like both eyes, both kidneys, and both breasts).
- Siblings with multiple childhood cancers (like sarcoma in both a brother and a sister).

- Cancer that develops in a sex that is often unaffected (like breast cancer in a man).

- Several generations have been affected by cancer (like in a grandfather, father, and son).

One is more likely to concern about cancer in a close relative like a parent or sibling (brother or sister) than in a more distant relative. Even if a gene mutation caused cancer in a distant cousin, there is less likelihood that the aberrant gene would be passed on than with a closer family. Additionally, it's crucial to consider each side of the family independently. Having several relatives with the same form of cancer is more worrying than having multiple relatives with various cancer types. However, there is an elevated risk of certain cancers in some family cancer syndromes. For instance, families with hereditary breast and ovarian cancer syndrome have a higher chance of developing breast and ovarian cancer. Lynch syndrome raises the risk of colon and endometrial cancer (also known as hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer, or HNPCC).

Similar to how cases of a more frequent disease are less concerning, several cases of a rare cancer are more concerning. With even one instance of some uncommon cancers, the likelihood of a familial cancer syndrome is comparatively high. Another key factor is the patient's age at the time of the cancer diagnosis. For instance, colon cancer is uncommon in those under the age of 30. A familial cancer syndrome may be indicated by having close relatives under the age of 30 who have colon cancer. On the other hand, because prostate cancer affects older men often, it is less likely that your father and his brother developing the disease in their 80s was the result of a hereditary cancer condition.

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