

## 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 & Newcastle Area

### Camperdown

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

### Liverpool

Liverpool Hospital  
Health Services Building  
Department of Clinical Genetics  
Tel. (02) 9828 4588

### Newcastle

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

### Randwick

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

### 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  
to your future

NSW Genetics  
Education Program  
PO Box 317  
St Leonards NSW 1509  
Tel. (02) 9926 7324  
Fax. (02) 9906 7529

For further copies please contact:  
Better Health Centre - Publications Warehouse  
Locked Mail Bag 5003 Gladesville NSW 2111  
Tel. (02) 9816 0452 Fax. (02) 9816 0492

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NSW HealthWeb site: [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

Genetics 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) disorders

Genetic disorders are problems in our development or health which result from an irregularity 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 disorders include heart disease, asthma and some forms of cancer.

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

## Genetics tests

Some genetic disorders do not become evident until adulthood. In many cases an irregularity may be present in your genes but you will never develop the disorder.

For some disorders, tests are available to detect if you are carrying an irregularity in your genes. These tests will help tell you if you are at risk of developing the disorder yourself and /or if there is a chance that your children or future children may develop a disorder.

## 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 disorder in a family member and the chance of it occurring in future children.
- The diagnosis of a rare disorder 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.
- An abnormality 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 disorder, or passing it on to your children, is much less than you fear. Many disorders are not directly related to genes and are therefore unlikely to be inherited.

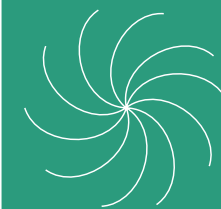
## About genetics services

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 can provide you with any of the following services:

- take your family history
- discuss and/or organise appropriate tests
- advise you on the chance that you, other family members, or future children will be affected by a particular genetic disorder
- provide information and supportive counselling when an abnormality 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 disorder 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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