

What is a Genetic Counsellor?

It is important to know your family history for you and your children's health.

How can I see a Genetic Counsellor?

If you have genetic concerns, talk to your health care provider. He or she will be able to sort through your concerns and if appropriate, refer you to the Genetic Counselling service available in your community.

How can I get more information about Genetic Counselling?

Please visit the website of the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors (CAGC) to get more information: www.cagc-accg.ca
A list of all the Genetic Clinics in Canada is also found at this website.



Helping people understand and cope with hereditary conditions.



Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors
Association Canadienne des Conseillers en Génétique

Health and Genetics

Genetic conditions happen because of changes (called mutations) in a person's genetic information. They are either passed down through families (inherited) or happen by chance when a baby is conceived. Some genetic conditions are better known to us, like Down syndrome, cystic fibrosis, or haemophilia, and some are less well known.

When a person or family has a genetic condition it is important to give support to help with understanding and adapting to the diagnosis. Genetic Counsellors are health professionals with specialized training and experience in the areas of medical genetics and counselling.

What is a Genetic Counsellor?

A Genetic Counsellor can help you understand how certain diseases, disabilities, or birth defects can affect you and the rest of your family. They also give counselling support so you can make a personal decision about your health and the health of your children or pregnancies. Genetic Counsellors usually work in genetic clinics specialized in prenatal, pediatric, adult or cancer care. Genetic Counsellors also serve as educators and resource people for other healthcare professionals and for the general public. Increasingly, Genetic Counsellors are working in non-traditional roles within both public and private health related institutions. These roles include administration, marketing, consulting, and activities related to research in the field of medical genetics and genetic counselling.

Genetic Counsellors can help you to understand:

- The chances for you or your children to have or to develop a condition passed down in the family (inherited).
- The medical facts about a genetic condition.
- Whether genetic testing is available for a genetic condition.
- Your options for dealing with a genetic condition and help you to make informed decisions to do with genetic testing and related genetic issues.
- What resources and support groups are in your area.
- The latest research or treatment information.
- Next steps for your follow up care.

Who is Genetic Counselling available to?

Genetic counselling is available to individuals, couples and families who have genetic concerns, including questions about the chance of developing a specific genetic condition.

Some examples of reasons why people come to see a Genetic Counsellor:

- A prenatal screening test or ultrasound has shown an increased chance of the baby having a genetic condition.
- A family history of cancer.
- A personal or family history of a condition that may be passed down through families (inherited); like a disease, birth defect, or condition known to be inherited.
- A personal or family history of infertility, miscarriages/ stillbirths, or mental or physical disability.
- A need for couples of certain ancestry to review the options for screening for conditions more common in their community.