

# Understanding BRCA Gene Test



## What are BRCA genes?

BRCA genes (BRCA1 and BRCA2) are “cancer-fighting genes”. A **mutation**, or change, in the BRCA genes will prevent them from working normally. BRCA mutations increase a person’s risk for breast, ovarian, and other cancers. They can be passed down from parents to children.

A **BRCA gene test** can help you find out whether you have these mutations. It requires a sample of blood or saliva. Based on the test results, your doctor or genetic counselor can give you advice on how to lower your risk of cancer.

## Do I need a BRCA gene test?

Your doctor may recommend the gene test or refer you to genetic counseling if you have a **personal or family history** of any of the following:

- Breast cancer before age 50, or at any age for males.
- Cancer in both breasts in same person.
- Both breast and ovarian cancers.
- High grade prostate cancer in 2 or more males.
- A relative with known BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations.
- Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry.

## What do the test results mean?

Your test result may be positive, negative, or uncertain.

### Negative result:

- You do not have BRCA mutations. Your risk of breast or ovarian cancer is the same as the average population.
- Remember to continue to live a healthy lifestyle and receive routine screenings.

### Positive result:

- You have inherited BRCA mutations and have a higher risk of developing certain cancers. But it does not mean you will definitely get breast or ovarian cancer.
- Talk to your doctor about how to reduce your risk. Your doctor may recommend getting screening earlier or more frequently, additional screenings, medications, or surgeries to prevent the cancers.

### Uncertain result:

- There is a change in your BRCA genes but it is unknown whether the change increases the risk of cancer.
- You may need more testing and/or monitoring. Stay in touch with your doctor and genetic counselor to figure out what steps you should take moving forward.

**Before getting genetic counseling or gene test, Prior Authorization (PA) from your insurance company is usually required to determine payment coverage.**

For information on various health topics, please visit [www.cbwchc.org](http://www.cbwchc.org) and click on “Health Resources”.



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