Focusing on You: Who is a Candidate for Genetic Testing?

Who should consider genetic testing? Why is the process so important?

Rachel Silva-Smith, a genetic counselor with the Department of Genetics at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, explains what genetic testing is, who is a good candidate, and why certain people should undergo testing to see if they have a genetic predisposition to cancer.
TRANSCRIPTION

Narrator:
Are you or your children at increased risk for breast cancer and other related cancers? It's important to find out because steps can be taken to prevent or detect it early.

Pam Giganti:
Rachel Silva-Smith is a genetic counselor at Sylvester. Hi, Rachel. Tell us what is genetic testing and who's it for?

Rachel Silva-Smith:
Hi. So genetic testing is the process of examining the genes that you were born with and that's typically done through a blood sample or a saliva sample to see if you've inherited any genetic predisposition to cancer. Genetic testing can be indicated in many different scenarios. One that's really important is any woman who's diagnosed with breast cancer at age 45 or under and if a woman is diagnosed at age 60 or under, they typically have to have triple-negative breast cancer. Any woman who is Ashkenazi Jewish and has breast cancer also qualifies for genetic testing. Any male with breast cancer also qualifies for genetic testing.

And if you see three cases of breast cancer on the same side of a family, so those are cases of breast cancer, but then there are some related cancers that can also be associated with similar genes where we would definitely want to consider genetic testing. One of those is ovarian cancer, another is pancreatic cancer, and prostate cancer that is metastatic or highly aggressive.

Those are all reasons for genetic testing, but again, there's many other scenarios so if you feel that your personal or family history of cancer is concerning, I really
recommend that you speak with your doctor and request a referral to see a genetic specialist.

Pam Giganti:
And why is it important that this be done at Sylvester?

Rachel Silva-Smith:
We have a team of genetic specialists would follow you in terms of increasing your screening and possibly any preventative surgeries you may need. So it's really comprehensive care at Sylvester.