

Which genetic counselor is right for me?

Assisted Reproductive Technology/ In Vitro Fertilization- You may want to see if a genetic counselor who practices in this area if you are thinking about using assisted reproductive technology (in vitro fertilization or IVF). A genetic counselor may also be able to help you understand the causes of infertility. If you are thinking about donating your eggs or sperm to help someone else achieve a pregnancy, a genetic counselor can also help to consider inherited risks in your family.

Cardiac Genetics – You may want to see a cardiac genetic counselor if you are concerned about the risks of heart disease in your family.

Cancer Genetics – You may want to talk to a cancer genetic counselor if you are concerned about the risks of cancer in your family.

General Genetics – You may want to talk to a general genetic counselor for several reasons. These genetic counselors often see people for many different reasons. They have broad expertise and can help with most kinds of concerns about inherited health conditions. A general genetic counselor is often involved when a person or family is trying to find a diagnosis. They are also available to help after a diagnosis has been found. If you do not think that your concern fits the description of any other genetic counselor in this list, a general genetic counselor will likely be able to help you.

Genetic Health Risks – You may want to see this type of genetic counselor if you want to discuss your risk for common conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. A genetic counselor who specializes in this area may provide you risks based on analysis of your family history. They may also be able to help you understand results of genetic testing that you have had that give you some information about your chances of developing these kinds of conditions.

Hematology (Genetics of blood disorders) – You may want to see a genetic counselor who practices in hematology if you or a family member have a non-cancerous blood condition. Some examples include bleeding disorders, disorders of hemoglobin (such as sickle cell disease), and thrombophilia.

Infertility – You may want to see if a genetic counselor who practices in infertility if you are experiencing infertility and want to understand the possible causes. A genetic counselor who practices in this area may also be able to talk to you about using assisted reproductive technology (in vitro fertilization or IVF). If you are thinking about donating your eggs or sperm to help someone else achieve a pregnancy, a genetic counselor can also help to consider inherited risks in your family.

Metabolic or Biochemical Genetics – You may want to see a genetic counselor who practices in this area if you or a family member have an inherited metabolic condition. There are many of these conditions, but they include conditions that affect amino acid metabolism, organic acid metabolism, carbohydrate metabolism, creatine metabolism, fatty acid oxidation, glycogen storage, lysosomal storage, mitochondrial function, peroxisome function, and urea cycle function.

Neurogenetics – You may want to see a genetic counselor in neurogenetics if you have a concern about an inherited neurologic condition. These are conditions that affect the brain or spinal cord. Some examples include autism, seizure disorders, and movement disorders. Genetic counselors working in neurology sometimes also see people who have muscular dystrophy.

Ophthalmology (Genetics of Eye Disease) – You may want to see a genetic counselor who specializes in inherited eye conditions if you or a family member have an eye condition that may be inherited.

Pediatric Genetics - You may want to talk to a pediatric genetic counselor if you suspect that your child has an inherited health condition.

Personal Genomics - You may want to see a genetic counselor who specializes in personal genomics if you want to discuss your risk for common conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. A genetic counselor who specializes in this area may be able to help you understand results of genetic testing that you have had that give you some information about your chances of developing these kinds of conditions. They may also help you to understand the risks based on analysis of your family history.

Prenatal/Reproductive Genetics - You may want to talk to a prenatal genetic counselor if you are pregnant or considering a pregnancy. A prenatal genetic counselor will talk with you about genetic risks that may affect the pregnancy. You may want to talk about an inherited condition in your family. You may also want to discuss whether genetic carrier testing or screening is right for you. You may want to talk about the results of a screening test that showed that the pregnancy is at higher risk for a health condition. You may also want to talk about certain genetic testing that may be available to anyone who is pregnant.

Psychiatric Genetics – You may want to see a psychiatric genetic counselor if you are concerned about the risks of psychiatric conditions in your family. Examples include bipolar disorder, major depression, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder, ADHD, OCD, personality disorders, alcoholism, and addiction.

Other – Some genetic counselors may specialize in other areas.