

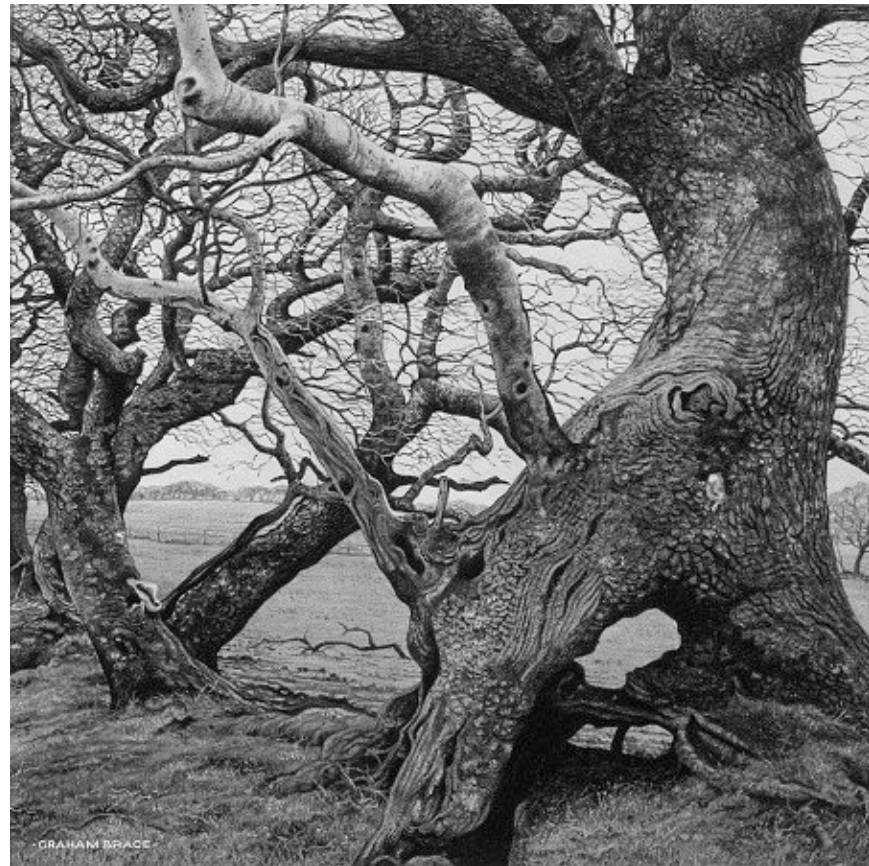
Family Health



Family Tree

Family health histories are often better understood when they are drawn out as a pedigree...

Or Your Family Tree



To What Degree?

People find it difficult when they start talking about their relationships to family members.

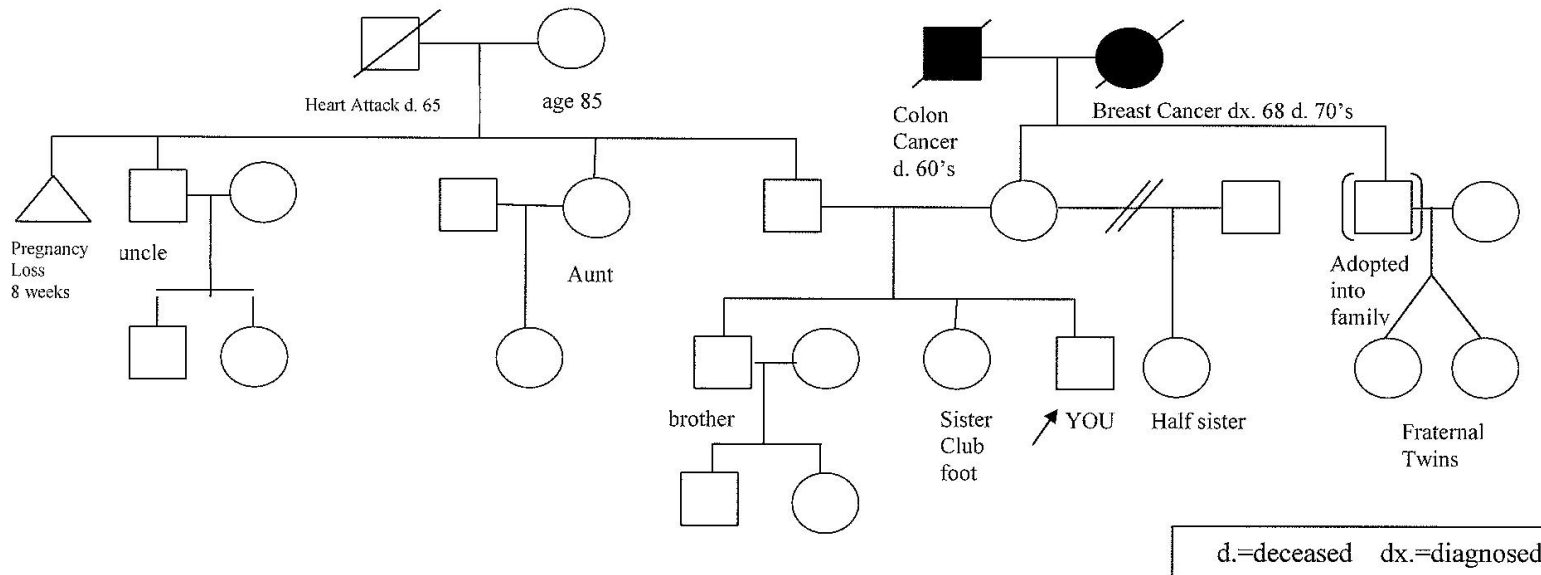
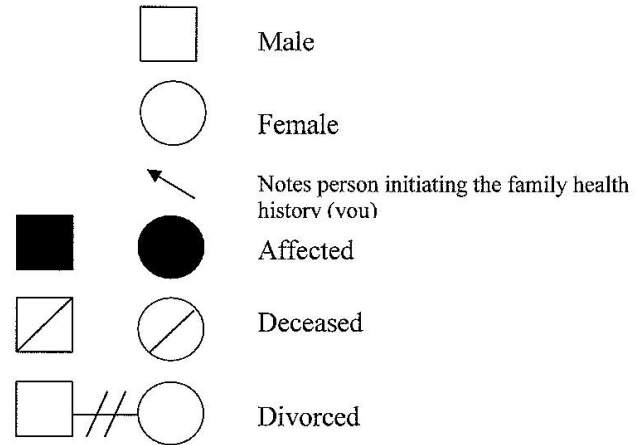
- **First (1st) degree relatives = One step away from you. They include parents, children or siblings.**
- **Second (2nd) degree relatives = Two steps away from you. They include half-siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and grandchildren**
- **Third (3rd) degree relatives = Three steps way from you and include first cousins.**

Back To Basics

Advances in genetics are happening at such a rapid rate that it is hard to keep up. In spite of the advances in science, one of the best tools to assess risk for a disease is picking up a piece of paper and pencil and begin recording your family health history.

**A Picture is Worth.....
YOUR HEALTH!!**

Family health histories are often better understood when they are drawn out as a pedigree (or family tree). Diagrams are more easily referenced and relationships are much clearer in a "picture." Below is a sample family health history and standard symbols used in a pedigree to help you get started.



What does your family have to do with your health?

Family members share

- Genes**
- Behaviors**
- Lifestyles**
- Ethnicity**
- Traditions**
- Cultures**
- Religions**
- Social supports**
- Stress**
- Environment**



Where do you start?

Start today with your immediate family's health history. The active participation and cooperation of your family is essential to collecting accurate information.

Talk to family members at family reunions, holiday celebrations, weddings, or other family parties.

Sharing medical information may NOT be easy

Respect those who do not wish to share their health history. Your family member may have important reasons for not wanting to share that information.

Words to Know

Genes ~ The basic unit of hereditary information that is the physical basis for transmitting characteristics from one living being to another

Genetics ~ The study of the way traits are passed down from one generation to another.

Words to Know

Genomics ~ The study of all the genes and how they interact with each other and the environment.

Chronic Disease ~ A disease that lasts a long time or recurs often.

My Family Health Portrait

Because family history is such a powerful screening tool, the Surgeon General has created a tool called "My Family Health Portrait" which can be downloaded for free and installed on your computer.

My Family Health Portrait

This program will help you organize your family tree and identify the conditions that run in your family.

You can print out a graphical chart of your family tree, as well as a table listing family members and their health issues.

My Family Health Portrait

Allows you to create a personalized family health history report from any computer with an Internet connection and an up-to-date Web browser

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>

If you have questions...

Contact your primary care physician about how your family health history can assist with your health care.

A family health portrait given to your primary care provider helps your provider consider both your genes and these other shared risk factors influencing your health.

Reducing Your Risk of Disease

You can't change your genes, but you can change behaviors that affect your health, such as smoking, inactivity, and poor eating habits. People with a family health history of chronic disease may have the most to gain from making lifestyle changes. In many cases, making these changes can reduce your risk of disease even if the disease runs in your family.

Genetic Counseling

Genetic Counseling is a process by which individuals and families can explore their genetic history, understand their risk for genetic disease and deal with the consequences of that risk.