



# FAMILY GENETICS UPDATE

## Why Do DNA Testing or Banking?

### *A Fact Sheet for Families*

A member of your family has been diagnosed with a genetic disorder. Do you wonder if:

- You are a carrier of the same genetic disorder?
- Your unborn baby may have this genetic disorder?
- You could have a child with this genetic disorder?
- Your relatives are carriers of this genetic disorder?
- You could develop this genetic disorder later in life?

DNA testing can answer one or more of these questions for some inherited disorders. It can also be used to confirm or make a diagnosis for some genetic disorders.

DNA is the genetics material found in each cell of the body. It is passed from parent to child, and carries the instructions for how the body develops and functions.

It is expected that DNA testing will become available for many other genetic disorders in the future. If testing for a specific genetic disorder in your family is not currently available, DNA can be stored or banked for future use.

The decision whether or not to have a DNA test or to bank DNA is a personal one. By seeking information, you can make a decision which is right for you and/or your family.

## **What is DNA testing?**

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DNA can be studied to:

- find the change in the DNA which causes a genetic disorder.
- identify which people in a family carry a gene for a specific genetic disorder.

DNA is usually obtained from a small blood sample.

## **Who in a family is needed for DNA testing?**

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Sometimes only the person making the request is tested. Other times, many family members, including affected and/or unaffected individuals are tested.

## What is DNA banking?

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DNA banking involves storing some of a person's DNA. DNA is usually obtained from blood and then frozen. This DNA can be stored for many years.

## Why bank DNA?

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DNA is banked so that it will be available in the future for possible testing. Often an affected family member is needed for testing. Other family members may also be needed. If an individual needed is not available, testing may not be possible. Unfortunately, this situation most often occurs when a needed individual has died. Although it may be upsetting to consider the death of a family member, important information may be available to other family members if the DNA from a needed individual is banked.

## Who might find DNA testing or banking helpful?

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- Individuals with a genetic disorder.
- Relatives of a person with a genetic disorder.

## When is it helpful to learn more about DNA testing or banking?

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The sooner the better. For some genetic disorders, waiting to learn about DNA testing

could mean that it is no longer an option for you or your family. Suppose an affected family member died and you sought testing after their death. Testing might not be possible unless the affected family member already had DNA testing or banking.

## What does DNA testing or banking cost?

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The cost varies. Check with your doctor or genetics clinic.

## How can I obtain additional information on DNA testing or banking?

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- You can speak to your doctor.
- You can contact a genetics clinic directly.

### To Find the Clinic Nearest You Call:

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**Alaska:** 907-269-3430  
**Idaho:** 208-334-2235 x258  
**Oregon:** 971-673-0272  
**Washington:** 253-395-6743



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