



Genetic Testing: Do You Need It?

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Scientists identified the human gene sequence in 2003 and, as a result, we have many more genetic tests than ever before. These tests can reveal changes in the genes, the hereditary information in every cell of the body. Specific gene changes can increase the risk for certain diseases. The tests are performed on a sample of cells from the inside of the cheek or from the skin, hair, blood or amniotic fluid.

You might need it if: Diagnostic testing can confirm or rule out a serious or life-threatening genetic condition or help determine the chance of passing on a genetic trait to a child.

You may or may not need it if: The test can identify changes that make you more susceptible to a disease with a genetic component. Predictive genetic tests are only one piece of the puzzle since diseases are caused by the interplay between genes, lifestyle and the environment. In many cases your lifestyle and environment are more important than your genes in determining if you are at risk of disease.

Talk to your provider or get genetic counseling both before and after gene testing. Important questions to ask:

- What is the potential meaning of the test results?
- How would it change medical treatment?
- What are the benefits and risks?

Testing may sometimes create worry or do more harm than good, especially if the results have little chance of helping. Get informed before deciding whether or not to do genetic testing.

Healthy Teeth, Healthy You

Most dental problems can be prevented with regular oral hygiene — and it only takes a few minutes a day, along with regular checkups.

1. Brush teeth 2 to 3 minutes twice a day. Include gently brushing along the gum line. Replace your brush once the bristles show wear.

2. Floss thoroughly at least once a day to remove plaque and any particles between teeth that your toothbrush misses.

3. Choose dental health tools that most effectively clean your teeth and gums — toothpaste, regular or power toothbrushes, floss, flossing picks and oral irrigators; your dentist can advise you about these items.

4. Use fluoridated toothpastes and mouth rinses to help strengthen tooth enamel, especially if you smoke or favor high-acid drinks.

Infection warning signs include: sore, bleeding gums, despite good home care; red gums; and loose teeth.



Q: What is night eating syndrome?

A: In **night eating syndrome (NES)**, individuals consume 25% or more of their daily calories in the evening before bed or during regular nighttime awakenings (twice weekly or more). People with this condition are often not hungry in the morning and may even delay lunch. One theory proposes that low levels of certain hormones create a mismatch between the cycles for sleep and food intake; however, research is still ongoing.

Some people are more likely to have NES than others. People with obesity, sleep apnea, insomnia, anxiety, depression and restless leg syndrome are at higher risk. Over time, NES can sometimes cause unhealthy weight gain.

Fortunately, some interventions do seem to help relieve this condition. Artificial light therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, exercise, education about NES and medication (SSRIs) all appear helpful, either alone or in combination. Your health care provider can guide you through treatment options.



— Eric Endlich, PhD

Easy Dinners with 5 Ingredients

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

After a busy day, you probably don't want to spend time preparing a complicated dinner. Luckily, many recipe magazines and culinary websites offer a time-saving solution: the 5-ingredient recipe (refers to 5 or fewer ingredients).

Assuming you already have some basic staples, such as seasonings and olive oil, the other 5 ingredients are common products you can easily purchase. With fewer ingredients, you save time at the wash, chop and preparation stage, and the recipes are pretty simple.

Most recipes have 3 components: usually vegetables, grain and protein.

For example:

- Lemon chicken with quinoa (keen-wah) grain and asparagus.
- Grilled salmon with roasted potatoes and carrots.
- Fish with sweet potato and Brussels sprouts.
- Teriyaki shrimp with rice noodles and green beans.
- Low-fat cheese omelet with toast and salad.



One-dish options: Some recipes combine 5 ingredients into a single gastronomic delight, such as:

- Tuna noodle casserole.
- Spaghetti with tomato sauce, lentils, broccoli and fresh basil.
- Asian noodle bowls of tofu and snow peas in a sesame-soy drizzle.
- Chickpea, sweet potato and cauliflower curry.
- Flatbread pizza with mozzarella, tomato sauce and peppers.
- Chicken chili.



More ideas?

Search online for **5-ingredient recipes**. They're always ready to go as long as you have a good variety of oil, vinegar, herbs and spices in your kitchen to amp up the flavor.

“Never let the **fear** of **striking out** keep you from **playing the game**.” — Babe Ruth

Breast Density: A Risk Factor for Breast Cancer

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Half of all U.S. women have a risk for breast cancer known as dense breasts. High-density tissue can make detecting cancer on a mammogram harder and might increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. It's an X-ray finding seen on a mammogram but not felt on a breast exam. Dense breasts are linked to an increased risk for breast cancer. The density also makes it more difficult to detect breast cancer on a mammogram.

What defines dense breasts? Breast glands, ducts and connective tissue appear white on a mammogram. Breast fat appears black. Breast density is defined as the ratio of white elements to black elements. More breast glands and ducts and less fat cause a breast to appear whiter, or denser, on a mammogram.

Younger women tend to have denser breasts and the density may decline with age. Other factors linked to dense breasts include genetics, slender build, no or few pregnancies and use of estrogen.

Just how risky? The relative risk for breast cancer is 2.1 times higher in women with extremely dense breasts, and 1.2 times higher in women with moderately dense breasts, compared to the general population. But dense breasts are not linked to an increased risk of death from breast cancer or other causes.

Breast cancer screening:

Digital mammograms are more accurate in women with dense breasts. Talk to your health care provider about all of your risks to decide the best screening approach for you.



October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



Reach your personal best with Smart Moves at www.personalbest.com/extras/18V10tools.

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