

Mainstream genetic testing for cancer: FAQ

When genetic testing is offered by your oncology team, rather than through a genetic service, this is called “mainstream” genetic testing. The main purpose of mainstream genetic testing is to help you and your doctor make treatment decisions. This document answers some frequently asked questions.

How is the test done?

- Testing is usually done on a blood or saliva sample.
- Tissue or a biopsy is **not** required.

Will I have to pay for the test?

- Medicare rebates are available with specific eligibility criteria for genetic testing.
- Eligibility can be based on your diagnosis and/or your family history of cancer.
- Some public genetic services will offer testing to people who do not meet Medicare criteria. They will have their own criteria for testing and may require health records from family members.
- Anyone can access private-pay testing from about \$450 upwards, depending on the lab and the test. Some labs offer genetic counselling included or at an additional cost.

Is genetic testing for research?

- Mainstream genetic testing is a **clinical** test (not research) that can help to make decisions about your treatment.

What does genetic testing mean for my/my relatives' insurance?

- A genetic test result doesn't impact on your existing insurance.
- A cancer diagnosis will already impact your ability to change or get some types of insurance.
- You may have to disclose your own genetic test result to change or make a new application for some types of insurance.
- An insurance company cannot request a relative's genetic test result or request that the applicant undergo a genetic test as part of any assessment process.
- For more information, read The Centre for Genetics Education fact sheet [Life insurance products and genetic testing in Australia](#).

Who orders the test?

- Medicare rebated tests require a specialist (like a surgeon or oncologist) to make the request
- Anyone on the oncology team, including nurses, can discuss your options for genetic testing.
- Other healthcare providers can request private-pay testing. It is important to work with a healthcare provider who knows that a lab is reliable, what test to do, what the results might be, and most importantly, what the results mean.
- You can also get more information and support from a genetic service. The Human Genetics Society of Australasia publishes a list of public and private [Clinical Genetic Services](#).

There can be a lot to think about when considering genetic testing after a diagnosis of cancer. An online tool at: www.mainstreamgeneticstesting.com.au can help you decide and discuss with your doctor.

