What can be done if I have inherited a faulty breast cancer gene?

Your doctor and a genetic specialist will go through your options with you in detail.

Some of these options include:

- Having regular screening of breast tissue, to try to detect another breast cancer early
- Having bilateral mastectomy now, or in the future, to reduce the risk of another breast cancer
- Having your ovaries and fallopian tubes removed after childbearing is completed, to minimise cancer risk.

What about my family?

Our priority at this stage is you and the treatment of your cancer.

If you choose to be tested and a faulty breast cancer gene is found, the implications for your blood relatives will be addressed at a time that is suitable for you.

Who can I contact?

For more information about treatment-focused genetic testing speak to your specialist

or contact

The Centre for Genetics Education

www.genetics.edu.au Phone:(02) 9462 9599

This brochure was developed and printed with the support of

Centre for Genetics Education

UNSW THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Making a decision about Treatment-Focused Genetic Testing

Treatment-focused genetic testing

Some women have inherited a change in a gene that increases their risk of breast cancer. We can test for these changes. The result of the test may be used to help a woman make a decision about her breast cancer treatment.

Before you and your doctor decide on the treatment for your breast cancer, your doctor has asked you to consider treatment-focused genetic testing. This brochure is to help you understand more about this test and its purpose.

What is treatment-focused genetic testing?

Treatment-focused genetic testing is a blood test done around the time of your breast cancer diagnosis to:

- See if you have inherited a faulty breast cancer protection gene (called *BRCA1* or *BRCA2*)
  - ◊ That may have led to your breast cancer

    and
  - ◊ Means you have an increased risk of another breast cancer in the future, and an increased risk of ovarian cancer
- Help plan your treatment.

Why do treatment-focused genetic testing?

Testing to see if you have inherited a faulty breast cancer gene can be done at any time. The reason for considering this test now, however, is to try to give you and your doctor more information about:

- Your chance of another breast cancer in the future

  and
- The type of surgery you consider now. For example, if a faulty breast cancer gene is found, instead of having the lump removed and radiotherapy, you may decide to have bilateral mastectomy (removal of both breasts) to reduce the chance of another breast cancer.

Why should I consider this test?

Everyone has breast cancer genes. Your age, family history, ancestry, and/or type of breast cancer has alerted your doctor to the *possibility* that you may have been born with a change in one of your breast cancer genes that made it faulty.

Despite this, inheriting a faulty breast cancer gene is still very uncommon.

In women diagnosed with breast cancer under 40 years, those with certain ancestries and/or types of breast cancer, the chance of detecting a faulty gene can be 10% or higher. Testing may help you to find out if you carry one of these faulty genes.

How is the test done?

- A sample of blood is taken
- The result will be available in time to make a decision about surgery
- An appointment with a genetics specialist is made to discuss the result in detail
- The test will be free

What does it mean if a faulty breast cancer gene is NOT found in me?

If you do **not** have a family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer and a faulty breast cancer gene is **NOT** found, it is less likely that your breast cancer is due to an inherited faulty gene.

However, not all breast cancer genes have been discovered.

If you **do** have a strong family history of breast and/or ovarian cancer, you and your family may still be at increased risk of these cancers.

What does it mean if a faulty breast cancer gene IS found in me?

If a faulty breast cancer gene **IS** found, it means:

- You have an increased risk of another cancer in either breast
- You have an increased risk of cancer of the ovary and fallopian tube
- Your blood relatives, if they want to, can have testing to determine their risk for these cancers and if necessary, obtain advice on how to reduce their risk.

The thought of having an inherited faulty breast cancer gene can be daunting. It is important to REMEMBER THAT THINGS CAN BE DONE to address any increased cancer risk for you and your family