

Date

Name
Address

Dear _____ :

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to share some important health information that concerns our family. Members of our family were recently found through genetic testing at _____, to have an inherited risk of developing breast, ovarian and some other cancers.

Specifically, a mutation, or genetic change was found in the BRCA1 gene through a simple blood test. Because of our family relationship, there is a possibility that you also could have this mutation. I want to make sure you have this information so that you could talk with your own health care providers about the possibility of obtaining genetic testing to aid in your own healthcare planning needs, and the health of your family members.

Both men and women can inherit, and pass along a mutation in BRCA1. Inheriting a mutation in BRCA1 does not mean that a person will definitely get cancer. Having a BRCA1 mutation does put someone at increased cancer risk. The cancer risks are significantly elevated. For example, women with BRCA1 mutations have a 60-80% lifetime risk of developing breast cancer.

The good news is that interventions are available to monitor aggressively for cancer risk, as well as significantly reduce cancer risk. Some of these interventions can be lifesaving.

The name of the mutation in our family is called _____ in BRCA1. Genetic counseling is necessary prior to testing, in order to ensure that the benefits and drawbacks of genetic testing are clear. Genetic counseling also ensures that each person understands how genetic testing could personally affect their health, and the health of their family. Most insurance companies cover the cost of this genetic testing, including Medicare if the person has a history of cancer.

A parent who has a mutation in BRCA1 has a 50% chance of passing it along to a child

Therefore, through genetic testing, some people will learn they did not inherit the source of cancer risk in the family and do not need to have aggressive follow-up screening or other interventions.

However, a woman who learns she has a mutation will need to have close follow-up starting at age 25. Men also have increased cancer risks and may benefit from special follow-up.

There is now published information showing that the follow-up for those who test positive for a mutation can greatly reduce their cancer risk and detect cancers early when they are most curable, so this can be very important information to receive.

You can contact the staff at _____ and speak with _____ at _____ for more details about genetic testing. Or you can talk with your own doctor about pursuing genetic testing further. You can find a local expert in cancer genetics through the National Society of Genetic Counselors via their website (www.nsgc.org) or through the National Cancer Institute by calling 1-800-4-CANCER.

To learn more about BRCA1 visit the website of the Bassett Research Center for BRCA of the Abramson Cancer Center at the University of Pennsylvania at www.pennmedicine.org/bassett.

Please let me know if I can give you any more details about this that might be helpful, and I hope you will consider pursuing this important health information.

Sincerely,