**BRCA1** and **BRCA2** genes (BReaSt CAnCer genes 1 and 2) play a role in protecting the body against certain cancerous cells. Everyone has these genes, but some people are born with a mutation. People with **BRCA** mutations are more likely to develop cancers such as ovarian and breast cancers – including metastatic breast cancer (MBC) and advanced ovarian cancer. A simple blood, saliva or tissue test can determine if you have the mutation and can be administered/recommended by a healthcare professional.

**WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A GENETIC MUTATION?**

You are more likely to have an inherited mutation if you, or a blood relative on either side of the family have had:

- Breast cancer before the age of 50
- Cancer in both breasts
- Both breast and ovarian cancers on the same side of the family or in a single individual
- Multiple breast cancers
- Two or more types of **BRCA1**- or **BRCA2**-related cancers (breast, ovarian, pancreatic, prostate, melanoma) are in a single family member
- Triple-negative breast cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Male breast cancer in the family
- Prostate cancer at age 55 or younger or metastatic prostate cancer at any age

While some ethnicities — for example people of Ashkenazi Jewish descent — are at increased risk of genetic mutations, they are found in people of every ethnicity.

**HOW CAN BRCA1 AND BRCA2 MUTATIONS INFLUENCE BREAST CANCER?**

For women who have **BRCA1** or **BRCA2** mutation, the risk of developing breast cancer at any stage in their lifetime is about 40% to 85% — about 3 to 7 times greater than women who don’t have the mutation.

Women with **BRCA1** or **BRCA2** mutation tend to develop breast cancer at a younger age (45 and under), and they’re more likely to develop cancer in both breasts. At this time, it is unknown if **BRCA1** or **BRCA2** influence progression of the disease.

**WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M AT INCREASED RISK?**

Your doctor may recommend talking to a genetic counselor about taking a genetic test. Knowing your **BRCA** status may affect medical options for cancer treatment or prevention for you and your relatives.
WHAT TESTS COULD MY HEALTHCARE TEAM RECOMMEND TO DETERMINE IF I HAVE THE MUTATION?

Your doctor may recommend a genetic test. Genetic testing is usually performed using blood, saliva or a tissue sample. A BRCA gene test does not test for cancer itself.

The sample is sent to a laboratory and takes several weeks for results. Test results can be positive, negative or inconclusive.

ARE THERE RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP ME DECIDE IF I SHOULD HAVE A GENETIC TEST?

Talking to a genetic counselor is generally recommended before and after having a genetic test and should be performed by a health care professional who is experienced in cancer genetics.

Counseling usually covers many aspects of the testing process, including a hereditary cancer risk assessment based on an individual’s personal and family medical history.

Discussion topics may include:

• Is genetic testing appropriate for me?
• Which genes to test for and which tests to order?
• Interpretation of test result and what it means for you and your relatives
• Psychological risks and benefits of genetic test results
• Is the genetic test covered by insurance?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Bring Your Brave program recommends taking the Know: BRCA Assessment before considering genetic counseling and testing.

For more information about Bring your Brave, go to www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/young_women/bringyourbrave

Talking to someone with a similar experience can help. Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered (FORCE), a nonprofit organization specialized in hereditary cancers, has a Peer Navigation Program that will match you with a trained volunteer and personalized resources.

For more information about FORCE’s Peer Navigation Program, go to www.facingourrisk.org/get-support/PNP