

# Family history can predict your future health


**Does your Uncle John have cancer? Does your grandmother have heart disease? Knowing your family history may hold the key to your future health.**

Families share lifestyles, activities, eating habits and genes, and all of these contribute to the risk for chronic disease. Tracing the illnesses of your parents, siblings and other close relatives allows your doctor to evaluate your risk and allows you to reduce your risk through changes in your lifestyle and healthcare.

Lifestyle changes obviously include exercising, avoiding smoking and improving eating habits. Healthcare options may include measures to detect disease earlier through additional tests, drug treatment or changing specific behaviors.

The easiest way to record your family history is to talk with your relatives. Start with your parents, if they are living. Older relatives can be very helpful in providing information about others in the family. Putting the information in chart form can make your family history easy to follow, easy to read and easy to update. Some red flags in family histories are:

- **Diagnoses that occur at an early age** (10–20 years before most people get the disease).
- **Diseases that occur in more than one close relative** and/or in more than one generation.
- **Clustering of related diseases in a family** (for example, heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure all in one family).



Visit [www.dhhs.gov/familyhistory/](http://www.dhhs.gov/familyhistory/) to learn more about family history, obtain a family history chart or record your family health history online.



Learn how family history impacts your health at the “Knowing Your Family History” program on April 25. Register by calling **832-8000** or **1-800-533-3463** from outside the calling area.

