

# Your genetic information: Are you protected?

**A recent survey found** that 17 percent of Americans are afraid of unfair treatment as a result of getting a genetic test for disease. Currently, only a few tests can tell you if you are more likely to get a disease that runs in your family. Some people have been treated unfairly because of the results of a test for a disease, but it has not occurred very often.

This fear of being treated unfairly, however, comes at a cost. Patients may not tell their doctors about a disease that runs in their family. Patients may pay out-of-pocket for tests to keep their insurance company from finding out. Some patients may choose not to have a test that would find a disease early since it would be put in their medical records. However, the quality of your healthcare can be better if you get a test you need or if you share information about your family's health history.

Some patients will keep worrying until the law guards against unfair treatment in insurance and employment. Laws have already been put in place to help protect patients from unfair treatment, but most Americans are not aware of the laws that protect the privacy of their genetic information. While these laws vary from state to state, there are a few federal laws in place and one bill currently in the U.S. Congress that will protect more people if passed.

For more information on laws that protect you from unfair treatment, go to The Genomedical Connection's Web site at [www.genomic-medicine.org](http://www.genomic-medicine.org). Search under Ethics and Law.

