High-risk women benefit from screening and close monitoring. When diagnosed early, cancer is more treatable.

Penn State Hershey can help you determine your risk.

“How can you decrease your risk for Breast or Ovarian Cancer?”

Maria Baker, Ph.D.

Penn State Hershey Breast Center

30 Hope Drive, Suite 1800 (Entrance A)

Hershey, PA 17033

For more information: 717-531-5867

The Team

Leah Cream, M.D., medical oncologist

Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute, directs the hereditary risk program of Penn State Hershey Breast Center.

Annie Arguin, M.S.N., C.R.N.P., O.C.N.,

Penn State Hershey Breast Center, provides risk assessment and follow-up across the continuum of care.

Maria Baker, Ph.D.

Rio Stenner, M.G.C.

Genetic counselors: Maria J. Baker, Ph.D., M.S., medical geneticist/genetic counselor, and Rio Stenner, M.G.C., genetic counselor, provide services to families with a history of cancer that remains unexplained by BRCA1 and BRCA2 testing, as well as families who receive complicated test results and desire a more in-depth genetics evaluation.

“Today well lived makes yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope.”

–Sanskrit Proverb

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Although the exact cause of cancer is still unclear, cancer is related to damage in our DNA or genes. Despite this connection with our genes, true hereditary cancer is rare. In Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Syndrome (HBOCS), a “mutation,” or change, in a single gene can be passed from either parent to a child. This inherited mutation can greatly increase a person’s chance of developing breast, ovarian, or other cancers.

Learning about your risk early may help you prevent cancer from occurring or detect it early when it is most treatable. Many women have found that understanding their inherited risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer provides a better opportunity—and additional options—to protect their health and the health of women in their family.

Through genetic consultation, Penn State Hershey Breast Center initiates the process to determine those at risk for HBOCS, providing support through each step of the process. If appropriate, genetic testing may be considered to determine if you have the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene alteration.

Are you at high risk for breast or ovarian cancer?

Everyone has some risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer; however the following factors may increase your risk:

- Age
- Hormone Replacement Therapy
- Lifestyle
- Strong family history of either disease
- Exposure to ionizing radiation
- Reproductive factors
- A personal history of breast cancer

What to Expect

The Penn State Hershey team of specialists includes a nurse practitioner, medical oncologist, genetic counselor, and other health care professionals who meet regularly to develop individualized care plans.

The team meets with individuals to obtain a personal and family medical history. Patients learn the significance of risk factors and the role genetics play in their cancer risk assessment.

Patients are provided a detailed plan of care tailored to the specific risk level. Personal plans may include a schedule of periodic mammograms, physical exams, breast MRI, prophylactic surgery, or preventative anti-hormone therapy. Tamoxifen and exemestane have been shown to decrease breast cancer incidence in women at higher than average risk of breast cancer.

Cancer Risk Assessment

Cancer risk assessment and genetic counseling require confidential and personalized care by a team of specialists. Counseling sessions provide more information about your risk for breast and ovarian cancer.

Cancer risk assessment includes the following:

- a detailed family history evaluation;
- a personal risk assessment for breast and ovarian cancer;
- a genetic testing discussion (if applicable) including risks, benefits, and limitations;
- a thorough review of personal screening and surveillance guidelines; and
- a full written report summarizing the patient’s counseling sessions.

Cancer risk counseling is tailored for each individual specifically based on her risk profile.

“Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible and achieves the impossible.”

—Helen Keller