



Pink Hope Guide to

Starting The Conversation



Pink Hope is a preventative health hub that gives our community the tools to assess, manage and reduce their risk of breast and ovarian cancer. We also provide personalised support for at-risk women and aim to empower people to take charge of their own health by assessing, understanding, and reducing their risk of breast and ovarian cancer. **This booklet is the first step to being your own health advocate.**

**KNOW YOUR RISK,
CHANGE YOUR FUTURE!**



How to Start the Conversation.

Here are some tips for discussing this with your family when you are documenting your family health history:

- **Talk to a relative/s you feel comfortable with.** Remember, some may not wish to discuss health matters. However, you may still be able to gather information or partial information about them from other members of your family.
- **Choose an appropriate time and situation to ask for the information.** Be sensitive with your questions and respect your relative's decision if they do not want to talk about it or find it uncomfortable to discuss health matters.
- **Explain how this information is for the benefit of your health and for future generations.**
- **Write the information down** and add to your list as new information is found.
- **Don't worry if your list is incomplete.** You may have lost contact with some relatives, or older generations may have passed, making it impossible to find out information about their health history. In this case it is still worth recording everything you can, as your family health history document will be of benefit to future generations in your family.

Remember to include the men in your family as they can be carriers of gene mutations as well. Record all important information and keep it safe and add to it as you learn more.

Talk to your family.

To help you determine your family history of breast and ovarian cancer due to an inherited gene, look on both your father's and mother's side of the family for:

- **The number of blood relatives who may have developed cancer.** The more blood relatives who have developed cancer, the more likely the cancer is due to an inherited faulty gene.
- **The types of cancer** (in particular breast, ovarian and bowel cancer).
- **The age at which cancers in the family developed.** The younger people were when they developed cancer (compared to what is expected in the general community), the more likely it is to be due to hereditary factors. Before 50 is considered "early" for the development of breast and ovarian cancers.

The more cancer patterns that are present, the more likely it is that there is an inherited faulty gene in the family causing a higher than usual chance of cancer. However, it is not definite. It is important to know that some people who inherit a faulty gene that causes an increased chance of cancer, never go on to develop cancer.

Understanding your risk of hereditary cancer can empower you to take action and share important health information with your loved ones. Read more in our blog ["Online Resources for At Risk Women"](#)



Ask an Expert.

Seek Professional Medical Advice to Assess Your Risk

If your family history looks significant, take your Family Health Tree to your GP and discuss your risk. Ask for a referral to a [Family Cancer Clinic](#) if you believe you are at high-risk and want further assessment and advice.

At a Family Cancer Clinic, you can see a Genetic Counsellor who is trained in providing counselling and information to families with a history of cancer. A list of the Family Cancer Clinics within Australia can be found [here](#).

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Learn About Your Healthcare Options.

If you determine that you are high-risk, you now need to research your options. The Genetic Counsellor at the Family Cancer Clinic can help you by explaining genetics and inherited cancer, individual risk, screening, and cancer risk reduction strategies.

The [Pink Hope website](#) has detailed information on screening, risk reducing medication and surgical options. Start here to learn more about your health care choices.



What Family Health Info to Collect.

Use the Family Health Tree to record your family health history of breast, ovarian and prostate cancer. Record both your father's and mother's side of the family, noting:

1. *Have any of your blood relatives had cancer?*
 2. *What types of cancer were they?*
 3. *How old were they when they developed cancer?*
- **The number of blood relatives** (people biologically related to you) who developed cancer. The more blood relatives who have developed cancer, the more likely the cancer is due to an inherited faulty gene
 - **The types of cancer** (in particular breast, ovarian and/or prostate cancer)
 - **The age at which cancers in the family developed.** The younger people were when they developed cancer (compared to what is expected in the general community), the more likely it is to be due to hereditary factors. Before 50 is considered 'early' for the development of breast and ovarian cancers.
 - **The age at which a relative died and the cause of death** (in particular if it is breast, ovarian and/or prostate cancer).

When documenting your Family Health History you should think about the health of family members that are related to you by blood only. This includes your:

- **Father, Mother, Sister/s**
- **Brother/s Children, Grandparents**
- **Aunts, Uncles, Cousins**

It is of greatest importance to know the health of your first degree (immediate) relatives. First degree relatives are your father, mother, siblings and children. Your grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins are known as your second-degree relatives.

Take Action Today.

Make A Plan and Manage Your Risk

Make a decision and commitment to yourself about how you are going to manage your risk. What you come up with is your plan and there is no wrong or right way to do things, only the right plan and decision for you. Some women commit to screening while others will go straight for surgery.

Below is Sammy's story, she is one of our Pink Hope ambassadors, and here talks about how she researched her family health history and found herself to be BRCA1.

"When I was 18, my nana passed away from breast cancer. After attending her funeral, my mum and I made a family tree of all the women in the family and discovered there were a staggering 13 women who have had breast cancer just on my mum's side!

My mum had a double mastectomy at the age of 30 after been diagnosed with breast cancer. I then got in contact with a cousin and after two years of tests and agonising waits, we found the breast cancer gene. I had several chats with my partner, my mum, dad and genetics counsellor to make the decision to have the gene test myself. It came back positive. I have the BRCA1 gene fault. I had mentally prepared myself for this result and in a way I find myself lucky that I know my condition, so I can make the best decision for my health.

I constantly think about this and have weighed all my options. After many thoughts and consultations with specialists I have decided that I'm going to have a preventative mastectomy. I have just celebrated my 21st birthday and I feel really passionate about my decision. I hope that one day I can inspire other young women, who may be feeling scared and anxious, to make a decision that is the best one for them."

We Believe In Hope.

For further information, please contact:

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The logo for Pink Hope, featuring the word "pink" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, with the word "hope" in a similar font below it. A vertical line is positioned to the left of the word "hope", and the letter "p" in "pink" is slightly offset to the left.

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hope**