

PRENATAL GENETIC COUNSELING

WHAT IS GENETIC COUNSELING?

Genetic counseling involves an assessment of a family or pregnancy history for factors that may be associated with an increased chance for genetic conditions or birth defects. In a prenatal genetic counseling session, the goal is not only to assess the risk factors, but also to explain the reason behind the risk and to provide information about birth defects and genetic conditions including inheritance, prognosis, possible treatments, and availability of testing.

WHO ARE GENETIC COUNSELORS?

Genetic counselors are master's level health professionals who work as part of a genetic services team in prenatal, pediatric, adult, and cancer settings. Prenatal counselors help families understand how genetic conditions are inherited and what prenatal testing options are available to determine if a birth defect or genetic condition is present. They also help in the interpretation of medical information and work closely with obstetricians in coordination of a patient's care.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM PRENATAL GENETIC COUNSELING?

- Any woman who will be 35 or older at the time of delivery
- Any woman with a positive first or second trimester maternal serum screen
- Any woman who has had 3 or more pregnancy losses
- Any woman with a family history of a genetic condition/birth defect or who has a partner with a family history of a genetic condition/birth defect
- Any woman with concerns about drug, medication, infections, or chemical exposures before and/or during pregnancy
- Any woman with a concerning ultrasound finding

WHAT CAN I EXPECT DURING MY GENETIC COUNSELING SESSION?

- Discuss the reason for referral, including an explanation about your specific chances for certain birth defects or genetic conditions
- Give a detailed family history that includes information about individuals in the family with learning problems, intellectual disabilities, birth defects, multiple miscarriages, and the family's ethnic background
- Give a pregnancy/medical history, including any medications or chemical exposures
- Discuss the causes and inheritance of relevant genetic conditions, including prognosis and treatment
- Discuss available testing options
- Engage in decision making and/or decide on a plan of management

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