

## What to expect at your genetic counseling appointment.

What is genetic counseling?

- Genetic counseling is a communication process which involves the occurrence or risk of occurrence of a genetic disorder in a family

Who provides genetic counseling services?

- Genetic counselors are health care professionals with specialized graduate degrees and experience in the areas of medical genetics and counseling

Who should see a genetic counselor?

- Anyone who has unanswered questions about the origins of diseases or traits in the family
- Individuals who might find genetic counseling helpful include:
  - ◆ Individuals that have, or suspect they might have, an inherited disorder or birth defect
  - ◆ Individuals who are concerned about their risk of developing cancer based on their family history
  - ◆ Women over the age of 35 who are pregnant or are considering pregnancy
  - ◆ Couples who have had a child with a birth defect or mental retardation
  - ◆ Women who have had three or more miscarriages or early infant deaths
  - ◆ People concerned about medications, drugs, chemicals, or infections posing a risk to their pregnancy
  - ◆ Couples who desire more information or testing for genetic conditions that occur frequently in their racial-ethnic group
  - ◆ Couples who are first cousins or other close blood relatives
  - ◆ Pregnant women whose ultrasound examinations or blood tests indicate that their pregnancy may be at increased risk for certain complications or birth defects
  - ◆ Individuals concerned about inheritance of an adult-onset disorder running in their family

What happens during a genetic counseling appointment?

- The goal of the genetic counseling appointment is education regarding the genetic condition of interest
- During the appointment, the counselor will record your medical history and family history
- The counselor will discuss recurrence risks and the testing options that are available
- The genetic counselor will not tell you what you should do but will provide information to help you make an informed decision

Do I need to bring anything to the genetic counseling appointment?

- Yes, if possible you should try to collect information about your family history, including serious health problems of your relatives and ages and causes of death in the family
- If you were referred to the counselor based on the diagnosis of another family member it is helpful if you have medical documentation of that diagnosis (i.e. if your grandmother died from ovarian cancer, the pathology report stating her diagnosis would be helpful)

I am not interested in genetic testing. Do I still need to see the genetic counselor?

- Genetic counseling is more than genetic testing. Genetic counselors provide information to help you make the best decisions for you and your family
- Undergoing genetic testing is personal decision and the genetic counselor presents the information you need to make an informed decision

If you have any questions or need more information about your appointment, please ask your physician or call S&W Genetics at 254-724-2589.