

Does It Run in the Family?

A GUIDE TO FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY™

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Introduction

The history of your family is like no other. Each member is a unique combination of common ingredients passed down from one generation to the next. We may say “you look just like your Uncle Bobby” or “she has the same deep brown eyes as Grandma Carrie.” These similarities may be physical family traits that were inherited from members of the family. They are a family’s common ingredients that combine in unique ways in each new member. Some of the ingredients shared by families may predict health conditions which may occur in the future, or that “run in your family.” This guidebook will provide you with ideas and activities to begin to talk with members of your family and find out the events, stories and experiences that only belong to your family. This is your family history. You will also learn how to collect information about health conditions experienced by members of the family like Grandma Carrie on your father’s side or Uncle Bobby on your mother’s side and how other family members may have had those same conditions. The guidebook will provide you with a way to keep this information in a central place to add to as you talk to family members on those special occasions when families get together such as reunions, birthday parties or baby showers. You may also be able to refer to your guidebook when you visit your family doctor and are asked if anyone in your family has ever had this or that health condition. We hope this guidebook becomes a part of your family papers and will be useful in assuring that your family is healthy both now and for future generations. ■





Family History and Family Health History

Learning about your family history can help you understand your place in the world. It might also help you save your life and the lives of your loved ones.



Your Family is Part of History

The events and experiences of your everyday life are part of history. They are part of your personal history, part of your family history, and part of American history. History books do not tell the stories of ordinary people. But every story in history is made up of many stories of ordinary people. It is not possible to understand the big story without knowing all these little stories – including your family’s stories. When you learn the life stories or oral histories of your relatives, you learn more about the ways you and your family fit into history. You also learn about your heritage.

What is Family History?

A family history is a portrait of the lives of members of an extended family. It includes the stories of how your parents or grandparents met; how they arrived in this country; what kinds of jobs they had; what they did for fun. It also includes tales about relatives who were real characters and memories of foods prepared for special occasions. Gathering your family history will give you a deeper appreciation of your family, culture and community. It will also preserve these stories for future generations.

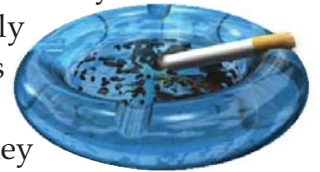
Family health history is one part of your family history. It focuses on revealing patterns of inheritance regarding medical conditions. It includes your parents, siblings and children as well as your aunts and uncles, cousins, half siblings, nieces and nephews, grandparents, and even great-grandparents.

Family History Affects Your Health

You can inherit many different things from your parents and grandparents. They pass on cultural

heritage and values through recipes, family sayings, stories, religious practices, music and song. You also inherit how you look – the color of your eyes and hair or your body size and height. These are transmitted through genes — small structures in your cells that carry information and which were transferred to you from your parents when you were conceived. Genes also can pass on the possibility of developing certain illnesses. See the reference booklet *Understanding Genetics, Environment, and Disease* included in this kit for more information about genes and genetics.

Your personal health is influenced by your family health history and by your family history in general. Family members share their genes as well as their



environment, the foods they eat, their lifestyles, and their habits. If members of your family share similar health problems, you might be at risk for developing the same health problems in the future even if you are healthy right now. But just because many family members have a certain health problem, it does not mean that you must also get sick. You might be able to prevent illness by being aware of your family health history and making the right healthcare choices.

Your Choices Affect Your Health

Your personal history is shaped by many factors. Some of these factors—such as your genetic makeup or the country you are born in—are outside your control. Other factors—such as where you live, what you eat, whether or not you smoke, whether or not you exercise, and what you do for a living—are to varying degrees determined by the choices you make.

In order to make choices that translate into a healthy life, you need to understand your current health condition, your risk for developing certain diseases, and what you need to do in order to stay healthy. Awareness of your family health history can help your understanding.

What This Guide is About:

This guide is about gathering your family history and understanding your family health history. It has four parts including some questions to help you interview your family. You might not find your family stories in a history book, but they are one of the most important pieces of information about your own health. When you explore your family history by asking your relatives to share their memories with you, you will hear some great stories. You will also learn information about the health of your relatives that can help you make good choices about your own health.■

The Importance of Your Family Health History

Do different members of your family have the same kinds of health problems?

- Your family's health history describes what kind of problems run in your family. Together, all of your family's stories about good and bad health are called your family health history.
- Many of your physical traits—eye color, hair color, and height—are inherited, or passed down in the family.
- You could also inherit the potential to develop certain illnesses, like heart disease, diabetes, or cancer.
- Your family history is one of the **most important things** in determining your potential for future health problems like heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer.
- But, by understanding your family history, you can reduce your risks by making changes to your lifestyle. Knowing your risk can change your behavior and save your life!

Carlos' Story



Every man in my family has dropped dead before the age of fifty...my father, my grandfather, and my uncles. I always assumed that I wouldn't make it to fifty.

A few years ago my cousin told me that he told his doctor about our family health history. His doctor did some tests and found out that my cousin was at risk for heart disease. Maybe even a heart attack. He put my cousin on medication to lower his cholesterol and told him to stop eating so many fried foods.

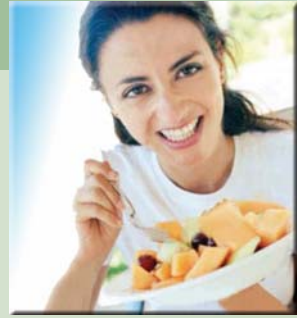
I talked to my doctor and got the same tests and advice. Last year, I threw the biggest fiftieth birthday party ever!

What can we learn from Carlos?

- Carlos, his father, his grandfather, his uncles and his cousins shared some of the same genes. But, they did not have to share the same fate.
- Carlos changed his lifestyle because he and his doctor recognized that he may have inherited genes that put him at risk for heart disease.
- Carlos could not change his family history. By knowing his family history, he was able to change how his own chapter ended because his genes are not in complete control of disease. Our environment and our lifestyle also play an important role in our health.



About this Guide



This Guidebook will help you collect your own family history. It shows you why it is important. This booklet can help you find out what health problems might run in your family. Knowing your family health history can save lives. Learning about it, writing it down and passing it on will be one of the most important things you can do for your own health and the health of your children.

INCLUDED IN THIS GUIDE ARE FOUR ACTIVITIES to help you gather and record your family health history. You can choose to do only those that interest you or you can combine all four into a full health history. You can also do them in any order you like.

A Conversation with Your Family

Talking with your relatives is a great way to learn about your family's history and your family's health history. This activity helps you interview your relatives about their lives and suggests questions that will help you learn about major health problems or concerns.

Creating a Summary of Health Facts

Many people collect and save health records and other important documents through the years. This activity will help you organize and summarize the information you collect.

Creating Your Family Health Portrait

This activity teaches you how to make a diagram of your family health history and tells how to include important health information.

Keeping a Journal or Scrapbook

A journal or scrapbook will help you organize information about your family history and your family's health for the future.

Other parts of the Guide give information on how lifestyle and environment can impact your health, and offers educational materials and listings for some local places to call if you need more information.

As you explore your family history:

- It is important to respect others. Some relatives may not want to share their medical histories. Some may not know their family history. Whatever information you discover will be helpful in some way.
- Sharing this information with your health care provider can help you work together to make better decisions in the future. Sometimes these decisions can even prevent the disease from happening to you!
- Your health history is private. You do not need to share it with anyone, not even your employer. But it can be very helpful if you choose to share it with your family and your doctor.
- Ask questions and seek answers.
- Don't be alarmed or overwhelmed if you find out about a health concern in your family.
- Take one step at a time.
- Ask your health provider about agencies in your community that can help.

Remember:

- **Learn about your family health history. It can have a good impact on the quality of your life.**
- **Share this knowledge with your family and health care providers.**
- **Your family's health will be the better for it!**



A Conversation with Your Family

Talking with your relatives is a great way to learn about your family history and your family's health. This activity helps you interview your relatives about their lives and suggests questions that will help you learn about their lives and about major health problems or concerns.



PERSONAL ANECDOTES AND FAMILY STORIES ARE important ways of sharing. These stories may communicate difficult challenges that a person has overcome or a lesson they have learned. These stories are a great way to gain understanding of your family history.

Family history is often shared during short one-on-one conversations at family events like baptisms, birthday parties, weddings, family reunions, holiday dinners, and funerals. These conversations provide an opportunity to ask family members about their lives.

Many people have a relative who has been promising for years to write down memories. Don't wait for them and risk losing part of your family history. Take the lead and preserve those memories! They will probably think your interest in their life experiences is an honor. Your time and effort will prove that you take their memories seriously.

It's time to begin a conversation about your family health history!

Tips for collecting family histories:

- Start with your parents if they are living. They may refer you to the "family historian." Often, older relatives like grandparents, aunts and uncles are also good sources of information.
- Talk to your relatives in person or on the phone; you can also send them questions by mail or e-mail.
- Set aside some time to talk with relatives you might not see often at the next family reunion or holiday dinner.

- If you are adopted, you may be able to learn some of your family history through the parent(s) that adopted you. You can also ask to see the adoption agency records.

Preparing for the interview:

- Write down what you already know- like relatives' names, where they were born or how many children they have. Then, prepare your questions. *See suggestions for questions on page eight of this guide.*
- Prepare questions ahead of time. You will end up with a more focused family history and it will let your relatives know that you are serious about this.
- If you record the interviews on a tape recorder, you can listen to the interview later and collect facts that may be difficult to recall. Recording the interview will also preserve something fragile and precious for you and future generations — the voices of your family members. By listening to how they express themselves, you can gain a better sense of who they are.

Remember:

- **Family members may not clearly identify all diseases or illnesses. Ask questions that invite family members to describe events and behaviors that might suggest health issues. For example, a grandparent who "never went outside" might have had a disease that prevented him from walking or standing or may have suffered from depression.**

Recording the interview:

- Carry out the interview in a quiet room where you and your relative can talk without being interrupted by other people or loud noises.
- Test the tape recorder before the interview to ensure that the recording equipment is working properly.
- Make an introductory announcement at the start of each audiotape, including: the date and place of the interview, the name of the person being interviewed, his or her birth date and current address and phone number.
- Keep the tape recorder running throughout the interview, unless you are asked to turn it off by the person talking.

During the interview itself:

- During the interview, write down health related information provided by your relative on a notepad or notebook. The notes will help you prepare a summary of health facts as defined in this Guide.
- Try to keep the questions short and try not to interrupt—let your family member tell their story! Ask one question at a time to ensure you get an answer for each question.
- Use follow-up questions such as “why,” “how” and “give me an example” to find out more details.
- Be sensitive to a person’s desire to not talk about certain topics.

- Consider asking him or her to show you photographs, recipes, personal letters, and other family memorabilia.

Once you’ve completed the interview:

- Label the tape with the corresponding date and the name of the person interviewed.
- Listen to the tape recording and prepare a list of the major topics discussed.
- List the topics (also known as an index) in the order that they were mentioned, noting the approximate time for each topic.
- Keep the list of topics with the audio tape box.
- Keep the audio tape in a cool, dry, and safe place.

Once you complete your interview, share the list of topics with your family member. You can also organize the information recorded into a Summary of Health Facts about each family member.

Remember:

- **Every story is a precious gift from your family member to you!**
- **Return the gift by helping them understand their family health history.**



Vanessa’s Story

As I gather family history, I am finding out that cancer runs in the family. But they are all different kinds of cancer so I don’t know if this is a pattern or not.

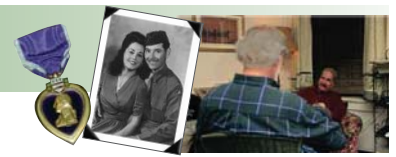
My aunt—my mother’s sister—had cancer of the esophagus and died. My Dad’s grandmother had cancer of the uterus and died. My Dad had colon cancer and lived.

So the question I need to ask my doctor is, “Are these types of cancer related genetically? What is my risk? Can I take a test?”

What can we learn from Vanessa?

Vanessa interviewed her family and found out a lot of information about her family’s health that she didn’t know before. Vanessa knows that the best person to share that information with is her doctor. Together they can look at all of Vanessa’s family history to determine whether there might be a connection between the different cancers in her family.

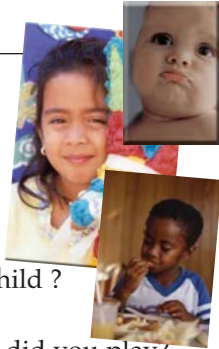
Sample Questions for the Interviews



Let these questions guide your interview. Although they are grouped by topic, it is best to ask them **one at a time**. Add your own questions that relate to your family. With these questions, you are trying to learn about their life stories as well as their health patterns, and what impact environment, lifestyle, and family may have on their health.

Questions about childhood:

- ☐ Where were you born? Tell me about your neighborhood.
- ☐ How did you come to live there?
- ☐ Did you have any specific chores as a child?
- ☐ What did you do for fun? What games did you play?
- ☐ Growing up do you remember any home remedies that were used in your family? What were they used to treat?
- ☐ Do you remember being told by a doctor or nurse that you got sick from something that was in your house, your neighborhood or from something you ate?
- ☐ Did you experience any health conditions (For example: allergies) or illnesses as a child?



Questions about adulthood:

- ☐ What is/was your job and how did you choose it? Tell me something about your work environment? What was it like?
- ☐ When and where were you married? Did you have children? What are their names and where do they live? How old are they now?
- ☐ What were some of your favorite pastimes as a young adult?
- ☐ Did you develop any health conditions or illnesses as an adult? Did any of these conditions require medical treatment or surgery? At what age?



Questions about parents and grandparents:

- ☐ When and where were your parents born? Where and how did they meet?
- ☐ What do you know about them, for example their occupations, pastimes?
- ☐ What do you remember about your grandparents? Where and when were they born? How did they meet and live? If deceased, when did your parent or grandparents pass away? What did they die from and how old were they?
- ☐ What stories do you recall from them or about them?
- ☐ Do you recall of any health conditions or physical ailments that affected your parents and/or grandparents?
- ☐ Do you recall if they took any over the counter or prescribed medications on a regular basis? If so, what for?

Questions about family life:

- ☐ When you were growing up, did you live near any sites that might have created a hazardous environment? Did you live through any major disasters that might have affected your health?
- ☐ What did your family enjoy doing together? How did you celebrate the holidays and other special occasions? What kinds of neighborhood or community events did you attend (church, clubs, etc.)?
- ☐ Can you describe for me a typical family dinner. Who did the cooking? What are your favorite foods? How are they prepared (for example fried, baked, grilled)? Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members? Were there special foods you ate for special occasions?
- ☐ Describe some common interests that are shared among your family members (i.e. quilting, gardening, table games, puzzles, music, sports)
- ☐ Do you know of members of the family that experienced difficulties in pregnancy or childbirth? What kinds of difficulties?
- ☐ Are there any health-related conditions or illnesses that you think might "run in the family"?
- ☐ Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your life or about health concerns in our family?





Creating A Summary of Health Facts

Many people collect and save health and other important records through the years. This tool will help you organize the information you collect.

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS OF ORGANIZING YOUR family health information. One way is to collect basic information on each family member to create a summary or “snapshot” of his or her family health history.

In both emergency and non-emergency situations, a summary of family health history information can provide knowledge that doctors need to diagnose and treat you or a family member.

This information can provide knowledge that could save your life!

For each family member, write down the following information:

- Name and relationship to you (self, parent, child, etc.)
 - Race, ethnicity and/or geographic origin of parents
 - Date of birth (or if the information is unavailable, write down your best guess—for example “40s”)
 - Place of birth
 - Current address
- Lifestyle
 - Occupation
 - Nutrition and diet
 - Exercise
 - Leisure activities
 - Habits
- Health History
 - Immunizations
 - Childbirth
 - Major diseases or health conditions (for example asthma, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, blindness and deafness, heart disease, stroke, cancer, arthritis, etc. Be sure to ask at what age these diseases or conditions were diagnosed)
 - History of surgeries
 - Current and past medications
 - Allergies to medications
 - For all deceased relatives, age at death and cause of death

Additional health problems to ask about are:

Vision loss/hearing loss at a young age (remember to record the age it began);

Birth defects such as cleft lip, congenital heart defects and others;

Mental illness, depression, learning problems, mental retardation, and developmental disabilities.



Note: If the actual disease is not known, symptoms and stories can be very helpful. For example, if your grandfather was confined to a wheelchair but you are not certain why, this is still important information to include.

Summary Page. The information collected above can be hand written in a notebook, on index cards or you may enter it in a computer. **You may want to summarize the information on each person such as:**



Name:	Francisco Diaz (self)
Parents' Origin:	Mexican father; Mexican mother
Date of Birth:	March 23, 1955
Place of Birth:	Houston, TX
Current Address:	123 Parker Street, Anytown, PA
Occupation:	Construction worker
Nutrition/diet:	Corn products, beans, rice, breads, beef and pork; frying cooking method (no fresh fruit or vegetables eaten regularly).
Exercise:	Played soccer during 1970s and 80s
Leisure:	Weekly game of poker, singing and guitar playing
Habits:	Smoker, one pack a day
Major health problems:	Overweight; high cholesterol; no surgeries
Medications:	Lipitor
Allergies:	Penicillin
Special Memories/Important events:	
Marriage to Abigail Latimer on May 14, 1980. Daughter Ana born June 4, 1987, Son Carlos born March 12, 1990. Ana suffers from asthma, and Carlos is a healthy child.	

How to preserve your health information:

Some people store all their family's medical information in a file folder. Others use a filing cabinet to keep detailed records over the years. Some others prepare a summary of their personal information and carry it in their wallet or purse.

Preserving your medical records requires a little bit of care. Keep documents in a cool and dry location.

Update your health information on a regular basis:

Your family health history is a living document. Set aside a time every year to update your family's health information. For example use your holidays, summer vacation, or other family-gathering event to do it. This will give you a chance to catch up with family members as well as collect valuable family health history.





Creating Your Family Health Portrait

This activity teaches you how to make a diagram of your family health history. It shows you how to include important health information.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO TELL YOUR FAMILY'S STORY. One way is to make a Family Health Portrait. Don't worry; you don't have to be an artist to do it! A family health portrait (also known as a pedigree) is a special diagram of a family history showing family members (including you), your relatives (parents, brother/sister, etc.) and their health status. Your family health portrait is important information to share with your medical providers. They can use it to assist in identifying genetic disorders in your family and in assessing your risk for a particular disease.

Your family health portrait will look very much like a family tree. However, your family health portrait also includes information about your family's medical history.

Below you can read Victor's story of how he made his own family health portrait. Using this as a model, you can make one too.

Victor's Story

Next week is my family's twentieth annual family reunion. We've been having them ever since my grandfather passed away from a heart attack. We always get together and share stories, eat great food from our family cookbook and talk about what has happened in our lives. This year I am going to bring the family health portrait I created for everyone to see.

It was easy to start. I began by adding myself! Any men on the portrait are drawn with a square.

Next I drew all of my brothers and sisters. I connected each of them to me using a line that looks like the branch of tree. Any women on my portrait are drawn as circles. My brother was married a couple of years ago, so I also added his wife and their two children. My older sister was born with a club foot. None of the rest of us has any health concerns that I know of.

Next, I added in my mother and father. My mother had a small family. It was just her and an adopted brother.

My father was one of three children. I added each of them the same way I had added my brothers and sisters. All of my aunts and uncles have children, so I had lots of cousins (including identical twins) to add to my portrait.

Finally, I wanted to add my grandparents. I found out that my mom's family was from England and Germany. Unfortunately, I never met those grandparents. Both of them died before I was born. My grandfather died from colon cancer and my grandmother from breast cancer.

Both of my grandparents from my father's side were from Mexico. My mom and dad both went to the doctor after my grandfather passed away. My mom found out that she has high blood pressure and my dad has high cholesterol. They are both on medication to help control their health problems. My grandmother is 85 and still lives on her own. We have the family reunion at her house. I can't wait to see everyone!

What can we learn from Victor's story?

- Victor's family health portrait includes everyone he could think of in four generations of his family. Maybe at the next family reunion he will learn about more family members or medical concerns that he can add to his portrait.
- Victor also included where both sides of his family came from. He knows it is important to keep track of family origins. This is because a person's ethnic background can influence the diseases that a person might face in their lifetime.
- Victor's family health portrait allows Victor to see that he might be at risk of heart disease. Knowing this may encourage him to change his lifestyle (food, exercise, etc.), which might prevent him from suffering the same health problems as older members of his family.
- His family health portrait even includes when his family members passed away from their illness and when their illness was diagnosed. Victor includes this information because he knows that the younger a person is when they get a disease, the more likely it is that other family members will develop it, too. This is because the genes passed down in Victor's family may carry a risk for that condition.
- Even though Victor is in good health now, he can share the information with his doctor. And after he shows the rest of his family, they can share the information with their doctors too. A family health portrait is very valuable for a doctor to see. It can help the doctor evaluate the health risks for Victor and his family.



Creating Your Family Health Portrait

How to start:

- Check first to see whether your family has existing family trees, charts, or listings of family members. This information may be recorded in baby books, photo albums, birthday date books, or a family Bible. There are offices in each state that keep records of births, marriages and deaths. You can call the “County Clerk” office where you live (look in the “Government” section of the phone book) to find out how to get copies of these records.
- Medical records are very helpful but may be harder to get. If possible, try to verify the medical history. But even if you don’t have official records such as medical records or death certificates, medical symptoms can be gathered from stories or descriptions from individual family members.

Collect the medical and health information on:

- Yourself
- Your brothers and sisters
- Your children
- Your parents

Then, go back a generation at a time and include:

- Cousins
- Nieces and nephews
- Aunts and uncles
- Grandparents



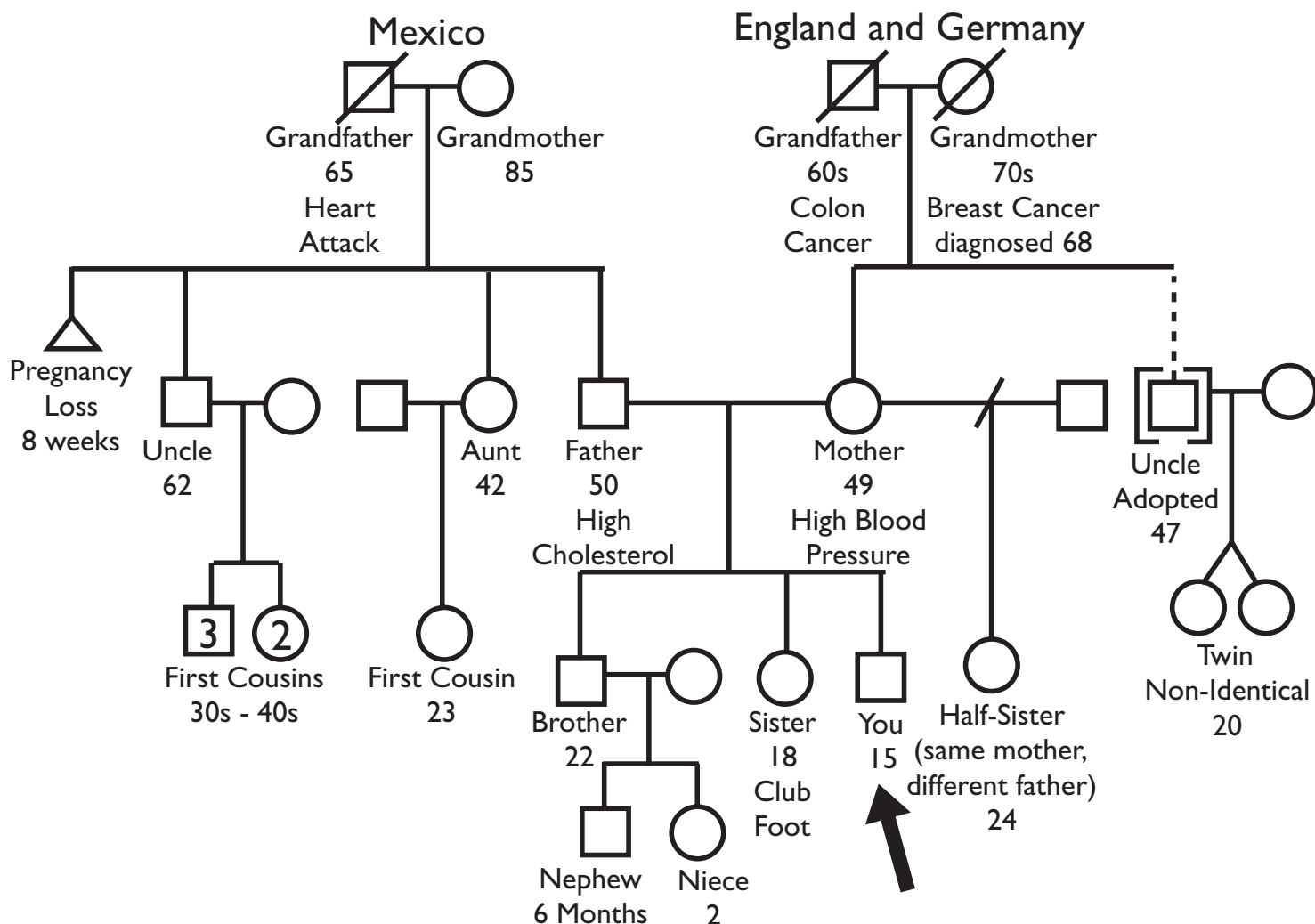
Write down for each person:

- Ethnicity and/or geographic origin
- Date and place of birth (or if the information is unavailable, write down your best guess, for example “40s”)
- For all deceased relatives, age at death and cause of death.
- Major diseases or health conditions, including diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, obesity, blindness and deafness, heart disease, stroke, cancer, arthritis. Be sure to ask at what age these diseases or conditions were diagnosed.
- Did Uncle _____ have his heart attack at age 42 or age 88?
- Did your mother develop diabetes in childhood or as an adult?

Create Your Family Health Portrait

The next page has an example of a 4-generation pedigree that shows each member of the family, their age, and their health conditions.

Above the mother’s side of the family tree is written where her family members came from (England, Germany), and the same is done for the father’s side of the family (Mexico). This information can be helpful because some genetic health problems occur more often in specific ethnic groups. It is also important and interesting to learn of your family’s ethnic background.



Below the diagram is a key to the symbols that are used.

Male / Boy

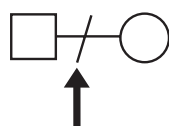
Female / Girl

Adopted

The diagonal line is used to show that the person has died.

Pregnancy loss.
Include number of weeks, if known.

SB stands for stillbirth.
Include number of weeks, if known.



This line is used to show parents who are divorced / not together

What if there is limited information about family members?

► If you do not know names and ages of family members, but do know the number of boys and the number of girls, you can do this:

Example: This shows that there are 5 boys and 3 girls.

► If you do not know the number of boys and the number of girls, use the diamond shape with the number inside it (if total is known) or "?".

Example: This shows that there are 8 children.

Preserve Your Family Pedigree

After completing your family health portrait, you should keep it in a safe place and try to update it every year (such as every Thanksgiving or at annual family reunions). When starting your family health history project, it will take some time to collect all of the information, but updating it should take less time.

If you would like to share a copy with your family or other family members request a copy, make sure each family member is OK with you sharing their information with other family members.



Keeping a Journal or Scrapbook

A journal or scrapbook will help you organize information about your family history and your family's health for the future.

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, JOURNALS AND scrapbooks have been used to record people's changing lives. They have been used by teenagers to describe their experiences of growing up, by travelers to log their steps, and by prisoners to reflect on the passing of the days.

A journal can be helpful in keeping track of changes in a person's health condition over time. By recording your observations, a journal may help clarify your thinking and show patterns of health or illness that otherwise would be missed. Keeping a journal may also help you manage the stress of remembering lots of information related to the health of a loved one.

If you are feeling more ambitious, you can expand your journal into a scrapbook where you can keep, not only your thoughts, but also the individual health facts and family health portrait you develop with the help of this guide.

Some possible uses of a journal/scrapbook for family health history include:

- Recording your family history including your family's health history.
- Recording your child's immunizations and any infections and illnesses they develop over the years.
- Keeping track of the medications prescribed for an ailing parent. Note how he or she reacts to adjustments in medications.
- Recording changes in your way of life—for example occupation, living environment, diet, exercise, habits, etc.) This helps if you become ill later on.
- Recording any changes in medications and health condition.

Tips for Keeping a Journal:

- Obtain a blank notebook and a pen. Alternatively, if you have access to a computer you may want to keep your journal electronically.
- Date each journal entry, and begin each new entry on a separate page.
- Don't be too concerned about spelling or grammar—write for yourself!
- Write regularly—every day or several times a week. Simply make note of how you are feeling.
- Read over the entries periodically.
- Talk to a physician if you note any changes in the health of yourself or your family member.



Tips for Keeping a Scrapbook:

- Obtain a scrapbook album. Scrapbooking has become popular and albums may be purchased at local Dollar Stores. Make sure the album is acid free to protect contents such as photos. You may also use a three ring binder and purchase the appropriate acid-free pages.
- Think about how you will organize the scrapbook and write the titles on the pages. You may want to organize the pages with different themes that represent the family experiences and history. Examples: time periods, family members, family events, medical events, where you live, etc.
- Determine items to be included in the scrapbook and organize according to the themes. Examples: photos, wedding invitations, report cards, burial programs, immunization records, newspaper clippings, family recipes, etc.
- Store your scrapbook in an upright position to avoid stress on the binding and pressure on your photos. Store in a room with a comfortable living temperature and out of direct sunlight. **DON'T** store your scrapbook in a damp basement or attic.
- Make time to keep the scrapbook updated. This may be once a month or twice a year. The best time is what works for you. You may want to keep a folder to store items to be added to the scrapbook at your designated time.
- Enjoy, and start to collect your memories!



Isabel's Story

We don't celebrate Mother's Day in my family.



We acknowledge Mother's day the week before. We don't celebrate on the day itself because it is sad. My grandmother died of a massive heart attack, on Mother's Day, when she was 39 years old. Because of this, my mother was always vigilant about preventive health care for her family.

Even though my mother was so careful about health care for our family, she did not know that she herself had a very serious heart condition. She felt just fine, but during a routine checkup two years ago, a doctor discovered my mother's uncontrollable heart arrhythmia. Mom was taken to the hospital immediately and a cardiac pacemaker was implanted the following day. Since they knew that my grandmother had died of a heart attack at a young age, they knew to take my mother's symptoms very seriously.

This knowledge about my mother and grandmother's health scares me because I worry about my own health. I know you can feel healthy but have a bomb ready to go off inside you. Whenever I go for my check-ups I always ask the doctor to check my heart thoroughly and she always runs special tests on it because of my family health history. So I feel that the knowledge is really a good thing.

I keep this story in a family health journal so future generations will know our family's risks and why we celebrate Mother's Day early.

What can we learn from Isabel?

- Even though Isabel's mother knew her family history, there was nothing she could do to prevent her heart problem.
- But, by knowing her family history and talking with her doctor, Isabel's mother was treated for her illness before it got much worse.
- Isabel knows that her best chance of being around for her own family will be to work with her doctor to catch any problems early!



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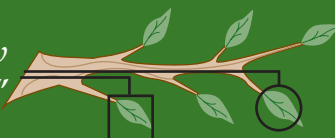
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