Genetic Testing for People with Skin Lesions

Why have I been offered a genetic test?

Most skin lesions (lumps or bumps) are caused by chance. However, a small number of lesions can have a genetic cause.

Testing done on your skin lesion has shown features that are sometimes associated with a genetic cause. However, these features are also sometimes seen in lesions that happen by chance. To find out whether your lesion is associated with a genetic cause or not, we need to look directly at the genes involved.

It is important for you to know that the test can also give you information about your risk of developing cancer in other parts of your body.

The results may also provide information about your relatives' risk of developing cancer.

The genetic test

The test is carried out on a blood sample and looks for changes in any of four different genes. These genes are called *MLH1*, *MSH2*, *MSH6* and *PMS2*.

People who have a change in one of these genes have an increased risk of developing cancer; in particular, bowel cancer and cancer of the womb.

People with a gene change can have extra screening or take other steps to reduce their risk of developing cancer.

If you are found to have a change in one of these genes, there is a chance that other people in your family have inherited the same gene change.

The results

There are three possible outcomes to the test:

The test may find a significant change in one of the genes

This result may explain why you developed a skin lesion. It would also mean that your risk of developing cancer is increased.

Because we share some of our genes with our relatives, there is a chance they may have an increased risk of cancer too. It would be possible for them to have a genetic test.

The test may not find a significant change in any of the genes

This result means we have not identified an inherited genetic cause for your skin lesion.

The test may find a change that is difficult to interpret

Sometimes the result of the genetic test is unclear and cannot be interpreted in a useful way. Further information about your family history or in some cases additional tests may help.

What happens after my result?

The doctor who arranged your test will give you your result. This may take up to 12 weeks.

If your test finds a change in one of the genes, they will offer to refer you to the genetic clinic.

At the genetic clinic you will meet with a genetic clinician who will discuss your result with you and what it might mean for you and your relatives. There will be time to think about the best way forward and they can spend time answering any questions you might have.

It might be that you would like this appointment soon after your results or you may wish to wait a while. You can contact the genetic service directly or ask your hospital doctor or GP to refer you.

If any of your relatives would like to come along to the genetic clinic, they can request an appointment through their GP.

What if I want more information about having the test?

If you would like more information, please speak with your clinician. You can also phone the duty genetic counsellor direct, at the number on this leaflet, who will be happy to go through any questions you may have or arrange an appointment to see you.

If your genetic test does not find any gene changes but you have a family history of particular cancers, it is still possible that you or your relatives may have an increased risk of developing cancer. If you think this applies to you, you could talk to your GP or hospital clinician.

Contact details for the genetics service

Your local genetics service:

Duty Genetic Counsellor
South East of Scotland Clinical Genetic Service
Molecular Medicine Centre (MMC)
Western General Hospital
Crewe Road South
Edinburgh
EH4 2XU

Telephone: 0131 537 1116