Q&A: Are You a Good Candidate for Genetic Testing for Cancer?

Is Heartburn Burning You Out?

Living Well with Diabetes

Plus HealthQuicks
- Bed Bugs
- Communicating Through Body Language
- Smoking and MS Link
Don’t let the bed bugs bite. Bed bugs are small, oval-shaped insects that hide in dark cracks and beds and bite you while you sleep. If you suspect you have bed bugs, search your bedroom and contact a licensed pest control operator.

Imitating a friend’s body language shows your friend that you are listening, empathetic and engaged in the conversation. If your friend leans towards you as she speaks, leaning towards her shows her that you’re comfortable and relaxed.

Research suggests that smoking may lead to an increased progression of multiple sclerosis. A recent study of MS patients showed that smokers experienced more severe disease and were more likely to have primary progressive MS, a continual decline in health.

Patients with Type 2 diabetes are now living quality lives thanks to education and advances in disease treatment and management.

“Patients diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes used to begin a rapid decline,” says Alvin Huang, M.D., endocrinologist on the Baylor Plano medical staff. “Today, patients live longer and better lives.”

“Type 2 diabetes is with you continually,” he explains. “You can’t ignore it, or consequences will follow. I encourage my patients to embrace and care for the diabetes. That way, they gain control of the disease instead of letting it control them.”

In Type 2 diabetes, the pancreas may continue manufacturing insulin, but the insulin is no longer used effectively by the body. Some patients can manage the disease with diet and exercise, while others depend on medications. Patients with Type 1 diabetes are solely dependent on insulin medications because the pancreas does not manufacture any of its own.

“While many advances have been made in both types of diabetes, the most dramatic changes have occurred in the treatment of Type 2,” Dr. Huang says.

To help patients fully understand the disease and the best ways to manage it, Baylor Plano offers a Diabetes Self Management Program. This outpatient program helps educate patients on ways to cope with the disease and to lead as normal a life as possible. For more information on the program, call 1.800.4BAYLOR or visit BaylorHealth.com/Plano.

You encounter germs everyday, so it’s up to you to get your body in germ-fighting shape. Valerie Kasmiersky, MD, family medicine physician on the Baylor Plano medical staff, offers tips on boosting your immune system.

• **Rest up:** Genetics, age and activity level come into play when determining the ideal amount of sleep your body needs, but a good estimate is between seven and a half to nine hours a night.

• **Clean up:** According to research, almost 90% of sickness comes from germs on your hands. So wash your hands.

• **Drink up:** Water helps your entire body operate at its best. Aim for at least 64 ounces each day, and get more if you exercise frequently.

• **Spice it up:** Garlic is an effective disease fighter and can prevent bacteria from developing. Consider including garlic in your next meat or poultry dish.

**ABCs of Cutting Your Breast Cancer Risk**

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an ideal time to learn what steps you can take to reduce your breast cancer risk. Lynn Canavan, M.D., breast surgeon gives you the ABCs of preventing this disease.

**A** is for **Apples,** whole grains, and the many other foods that comprise a healthy, low-fat diet. Research shows that eating a healthy diet and exercising can reduce all cancer rates by 30 to 40 percent.

**B** is for **Butt** out that cigarette. Smoking is known to increase risk of many types of cancer, heart disease, and stroke. If you smoke, your doctor can help you choose a medication to help make quitting easier.

**C** is for **Control.** Obesity is linked to increased breast cancer risk, especially in postmenopausal women. Work with your doctor to control your weight.
Heartburn Triggers

Is heartburn burning you out? Determining what triggers your heartburn can help you keep symptoms under control. Rassa Shahizadeh, M.D., gastroenterologist on the Baylor Plano medical staff provides a few answers to common questions about heartburn and offers tips on preventing heartburn pain.

What’s burning?
Heartburn is typically a burning sensation felt in the center of your chest and can mimic other conditions such as cardiac angina (pain due to heart condition.) Not everyone feels heartburn the same way and has also been described as upper abdominal pain, sore throat, hoarseness of the voice, chronic cough, and even sinus problems.

Heartburn can occur in anyone at any age and is also due to a number of conditions including obesity, pregnancy, delayed gastric emptying, etc. Certain medications and food will increase acidity in the stomach or change the function of the lower esophageal sphincter (LES), a band of muscle located between your stomach and esophagus. When this occurs, food and stomach acid can travel up to your throat, causing the harsh acid reflux taste. Heartburn is medically known as acid reflux, or gastroesophageal reflux (GERD).

The majority of people have experienced heartburn sometime in their life. According to research, one in five Americans experience heartburn once a week, and about 25 million people in the United States experience symptoms of heartburn daily.

What triggers heartburn?
Because each person’s body is unique, different activities and foods may trigger heartburn in different people. For example, you may feel fine after eating a spicy meal, but your friend may feel sick afterwards.

Food
Eating large amounts of greasy or spicy food right before you go to sleep is one way to trigger heartburn. The most common triggers of heartburn are foods with a large amount of fat, big portions, and eating late at night.

Avoiding foods with a high-fat content can help keep heartburn under control. Fat is harder to digest and stays in your stomach longer, which can aggravate your digestive system. Fattening foods also cause the LES to relax more, allowing the acid in your stomach to make its way back up into your throat.

The following foods and drinks are common heartburn triggers:
• spicy foods
• onions
• garlic
• peppers
• chocolate
• citrus fruits or juices
• coffee
• sodas with caffeine
• peppermint
• tomatoes

Help prevent heartburn by following these tips:
• Eat small meals. Eating five small meals a day as opposed to three large ones can help prevent heartburn symptoms.
• Eat early. Try not to eat two hours before you go to bed so your body can fully digest the food. Lying down makes digestion more challenging.
• Raise the head of your bed. Gravity can bring acid up to the throat at night when lying down flat.

• See your physician. Heartburn may not improve in some people even with strict diet control. Chronic acid reflux can lead to serious conditions such as constricting of the esophagus which could affect your ability to swallow and life-threatening conditions such as bleeding and esophageal cancer.

Exercise
Don’t exercise immediately after you eat as this can increase pressure on the abdomen. Try to wait for two hours after eating before you begin exercising. In addition, always drink plenty of water when exercising, and try to avoid sports drinks that have a high-carbohydrate content. If you must have a sports drink, then consider diluting it with water.

Medication
Frequent use of aspirin or other similar pain medication, called anti-inflammatory, can worsen and cause heartburn. Certain blood pressure medication and medications for heart disease are also known to cause occasional heartburn symptoms. Other types of medicine that may lead to heartburn include: some asthma medications, anti-anxiety pills, and muscle relaxers. Chemotherapy drugs and some medicines used to treat osteoporosis can increase your chance of experiencing heartburn or causing damage to your esophagus. To help reduce the likelihood of experiencing heartburn because of your medication, take your medication with a large amount of water and try not to lay down for about an hour after you take your medication.

Always consult with your physician regarding the medications you are taking and any symptoms you may experience. Your physician may be able to offer another treatment plan.
Are you a good candidate for genetic testing for cancer?

Lynn Canavan, MD, breast surgeon on the Baylor Plano medical staff, answers questions about genetic testing for cancer.

What is genetic testing? Genetic testing involves taking a sample (blood or tissue) to examine a person’s DNA for certain genes or mutations (errors in genes) linked to a disease. We can now use genetic testing to determine who is at high risk for getting certain types of cancer and to determine what treatment is most appropriate once a diagnosis has been made.

What genetic testing is available for cancer? Genetic testing is currently widely available for breast, ovarian and colon cancer. These tests are appropriate in families that have numerous members with these cancers and in families where these cancers are diagnosed at an early age. Only 10% of women with breast cancer have the BRCA gene mutation. But now we have a new genetic test to determine which women are at high risk for developing breast cancer that is not related to family risk. This test is called Decode and will determine the 5% of women who are at high risk based on their non-inherited genetic makeup.

Who should get tested? Genetic testing for a BRCA mutation is primarily recommended for those with:

- A strong family history of cancer at an early age
- A family history of breast and ovarian cancers
- A family history of male breast cancer
- Ashkenazi Jewish heritage who also have a family history of cancer
- Personal diagnosis of breast cancer at an early age or ovarian cancer at any age.

The Decode test is appropriate for any woman over the age of 30. No family history of breast cancer is necessary and requires only a swab on the cheek to complete the test.

To learn more about the role heredity plays in ovarian cancer and the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, join us for a free seminar on The Ovarian and Breast Cancer Link on Friday, October 2 from 12 to 1 p.m. in Conference Room A/B on the Garden Level at Baylor Regional Medical Center at Plano. To register call 1.800.4BAYLOR or visit BaylorHealth.com/PlanoEvents.