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# REFERRING TO A GENETIC EXPERT

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*A genetic expert can provide comprehensive cancer risk assessment, facilitate genetic testing, and interpret and communicate results to the patient.*

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Genetic experts are medical geneticists, genetic counselors, and physicians, advanced practice nurses, and physician assistants with specialized genetic expertise and training. Through patient education and shared-decision making, the genetic expert will facilitate genetic testing when indicated, and interpret results in context of the patient's personal and family history. Genetic experts are also a resource for you for guidance on cancer genetic risk assessment as well as management.

## PARTICIPANTS

Provider, patient, genetic expert

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

[Accessing Genetic Services Tool](#)

## BARRIERS

Lack of knowledge of where to refer, lack of patient follow-up

## PRACTICE THIS SKILL

[Web based module on Pre-test Decisions and Counseling](#)

## LEARN MORE

[Components of a GC Session Factsheet](#)

[Identifying Genetic & Cancer Specialists for Consultation](#)

## PATIENT MATERIALS

[Patient Education Materials](#)

## STEPS

- 1 Communicate the reason for the referral. Patients are more likely to adhere to the recommendation to undergo genetic counseling if they understand the potential benefits of the process.
- 2 Prepare your patient for what to expect during a genetic visit. A genetic counseling appointment may seem very different compared to other medical encounters, due to the length, detailed discussions, and involvement of family members. Review the main components and logistics of a genetic counseling visit to help prepare the patient and set expectations.

**Tip |** For all patients and especially those that are uncertain about genetic testing, reassure them that genetic counseling is the process to help them decide if genetic testing is right for them. Genetic testing is optional, and the appointment is an opportunity to learn more.

- 3 Provide contact information for genetic services and identify next steps in the referral process. If you don't already know your local genetic providers, you can identify them on these websites, which include information about telegenetics:
  - National Society of Genetic Counselors ([www.nsgc.org](http://www.nsgc.org))
  - American Board of Medical Genetics ([www.abmgb.org](http://www.abmgb.org))
  - International Society of Nurses in Genetics ([www.isong.org](http://www.isong.org))
- 4 Facilitate the flow of necessary information to the specialist. A genetic consultation is most effective and efficient when you can share the collected family history and reason for referral. This may be sent to the specialist's office in advance and/or printed for the patient to bring to the appointment.
- 5 Schedule a follow-up to discuss the outcomes of the genetic appointment, and to implement personalized management as indicated. Two months may be a good time to bring the patient back, although the specific time frame will depend on the genetic clinic and type of testing ordered.