



WAEPA CHECKLIST

5 Steps to Creating a Family Health History

A family health history is a written record of a family's health, medical conditions, lifestyle habits (for example, whether anyone in the family has smoked), and where and how family members grew up. It's like a family tree for health. You can use this information to see if you, your children, or your grandchildren might face an increased risk of developing serious health problems, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, hemophilia or sickle cell anemia. While we can't change our genes, we can make changes to our environment, lifestyle, diet, physical activity, and medical care — and that may go a long way in lowering our risks.

1

Make a List of Questions

You may want to start with the health issues you already know about in your close relatives (parents and siblings). Then, add the most common health problems: Alzheimer's, arthritis, asthma, blood clots, cancer, depression, diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, pregnancy losses, birth defects, and stroke. Leave plenty of room on your list to add information that may be provided by your relatives.

2

Make a List of Living Relatives

Start with your parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Then add your more distant relatives including cousins — the more relatives you can add to your family health history, the better.

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3

Make a List of Relatives Who Have Died

This is a critical part of a family health history. But remember, it's not just what they might have died from, it's also what illnesses they may have been suffering from while they were living. This is important information for you to have.

4

Talk to Blood Relatives

It's important to talk to as many blood relatives as you can. Sometimes they will be very helpful; sometimes they simply won't want to talk to you. It can be a very touchy subject for some people, especially when talking about family members who have passed away. But let them know that their knowledge will help the entire family — and all the generations to come.

5

Change Your Habits

The most difficult part of the process will be changing your habits based on your newfound knowledge. Once you start seeing trends in your family health history, you may realize that perhaps it's time for you to start making some lifestyle changes. Eating better and exercising more won't alter your genes, but it can go a long way to making you healthier — and perhaps making you better prepared to confront any health concerns you may face down the road.