



Surgeon General's Family Health History Initiative

Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy.

To help focus attention on the importance of family history, the Surgeon General, in cooperation with other agencies with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has launched a national public health campaign, called the Surgeon General's Family History Initiative, to encourage all American families to learn more about their family health history.

Americans know that family history is important to health. A recent survey found that 96 percent of Americans believe that knowing their family history is important. Yet, the same survey found that only one-third of Americans have ever tried to gather and write down their family's health history.

National Family History Day

Each year since 2004, the Surgeon General has declared Thanksgiving to be National Family History Day. Over the holiday or at other times when families gather, the Surgeon General encourages Americans to talk about, and to write down, the health problems that seem to run in their family. Learning about their family's health history may help ensure a longer, healthier future together.

For information on other activities of the Office of the Surgeon General, please visit www.surgeongeneral.gov.

(U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011; <http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/>)

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