Family Health History Guide
A guide to effective conversations

Why This Matters

Understanding your family's health history gives you a powerful head start. It helps you spot patterns, know what screenings to ask for, and make informed decisions that may prevent or catch issues early.

Who to Include

Start with your immediate family, then add parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. If someone isn't at the table, jot their name down anyway — their story may hold important clues for your family's health picture.

What to Ask

- **Conditions,** diagnosed illnesses, or major health issues.
- **Age symptoms began** or when diagnosed
- **If deceased,** age and cause of death
- **Lifestyle factors** and environmental exposures that may impact health — things like smoking, exercise, diet, occupation, or long-term stress.

You don't need perfect answers — just note how confident you are (certain, guessing, or need to confirm). Confidence helps doctors interpret risk more accurately.

Tips for Effective Conversations

Pick the right moment.
Find a relaxed, private spot where people feel comfortable opening up.

Lead with kindness.
Some topics are sensitive — go slow, be patient, and let people share at their own pace.

Warm up first.
Start with light, general questions before diving into specific health details.

Ask around the edges.
If someone isn't sure about a diagnosis, ask about symptoms, tests, treatments, or "what was going on at the time." Clues count.

Capture the details.
Write down what you learn so the whole family can benefit - and identify gaps to be filled.

End with gratitude.
Thank everyone for sharing — this is a gift to the whole family.

Heirloom Health

We are creating a new tool to make family health history easier to collect & share. Learn more and get early access to the tool at www.catalyst.wellstar.org/heirloom-health/

Family Health History Notes

A space to document your conversations

Family Member	Health Factors	Age of Diagnosis	Confidence
Immediate relatives - parents, grandparents, uncles / aunts, siblings	*Conditions, diagnosed illnesses, major health issues, lifestyle factors, and environmental exposures*	*Age symptoms began or when diagnosed*	*I know for sure, I think this is correct, I need to confirm this*

Create a digital, shareable record using the Heirloom Health App

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