



October 2015

## RE: Genetic Counseling Requirement for Breast Cancer (BRCA) Testing Frequently Asked Questions

Dear Member:

UnitedHealthcare is committed to helping you receive the best information possible to make informed decisions about your health care. UnitedHealthcare will begin requiring genetic counseling from an independent genetics care provider prior to approving coverage for Breast Cancer (BRCA) mutation testing for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. This requirement will become effective January 1, 2016.

A genetic counseling visit will help you learn more about the advantages and limitations of BRCA mutation testing. The genetic counselor will help you understand if your family history may be right for testing and they will explain what it cannot do.

Please refer to the following frequently asked questions to learn more:

### 1. Who is an independent genetics counseling provider?

A. There are many types of providers who can offer genetic counseling. We will ask the provider to tell us about their qualifications on the authorization form. Please see question No. 8 to find out how to locate a genetic counselor. The provider types include the following:

- A board-eligible or board-certified genetic counselor (CGC)
  - Advanced genetics nurse (AGN-BC)
  - Genetics clinical nurse (GCN)
  - Advanced practice nurse in genetics (APNG)
  - A board-eligible or board-certified clinical geneticist
  - A board-certified physician with experience in cancer genetics who has provided cancer risk assessment on a regular basis and having received specialized ongoing training in cancer genetics.
- In order to ensure an **independent** genetic counseling evaluation for our members, it is important for the counselor to attest as being non-affiliated with a genetic testing lab. Genetics providers employed by or contracted with a laboratory that are part of an integrated health system that routinely delivers health care services beyond the laboratory testing itself are considered independent.

### 2. Why are we requiring this counseling?

A. Two important organizations recommend genetic counseling before BRCA testing. The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts that makes recommendations on care to prevent disease. The National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) is a group of cancer centers that make recommendations for cancer care. Both groups recommend screening patients with a family history of breast and ovary cancers to determine if they should be considered for gene testing. The organizations recommend genetic counseling to help patients understand if the test is right for them and to help them interpret the results after testing.

**3. What is BRCA and why is it significant?**

- A.** BRCA1 and BRCA2 are human genes that produce tumor suppressor proteins. The BRCA genes produce proteins that help repair damaged genes in the body. Without these repairs some damaged genes may eventually cause cancer. When the BRCA genes are damaged or mutated, the risk of certain cancers increase. Specific inherited mutations of BRCA1 and BRCA2 increase the risk of female breast and ovarian cancers. They have also been associated with additional cancer types. These mutations are relatively rare in the general population, so testing should only be done in individuals with personal or family histories suggesting a mutation.

**4. Who should have genetic counseling to determine if they need BRCA1 and BRCA2 genetic testing?**

- A.** If you are a woman who has family members with breast, ovarian, tubal or peritoneal cancer, you should be screened. This screening will be done with one of the available tools designed to identify a family history that may be associated with an increased risk for BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations.

**5. How much will genetic counseling cost me?**

- A.** Most members will be able to get BRCA genetic counseling without cost sharing when performed by an in-network provider. UnitedHealthcare also covers the BRCA test without cost sharing for certain members who are women 18 years of age or older with a family history of ovarian and/or breast cancer, or a personal history of ovarian and/or breast cancer.

**6. May we use genetic counselors who work for a laboratory?**

- A.** In order to ensure an independent genetic counseling evaluation for our members, it is important for the counselor to attest as being non-affiliated with a genetic testing lab. Genetics providers employed by or contracted with a laboratory that are part of an integrated health system that routinely delivers health care services beyond the laboratory testing itself are considered independent.

**7. How do I find an independent genetic counselor covered by my insurance?**

- A.** You can use any of the following methods to find a genetics counselor:
- Visit [www.informedDNA.com](http://www.informedDNA.com) or calling InformedDNA at 1-800-975-4819 (TTY:711) to access nationwide in-network telephone genetic counseling
  - Call UnitedHealthcare at the number on your health plan identification card
  - Visit [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com) and search for genetic counselors
  - Visit the National Society of Genetic Counselors at [NSGC.org](http://NSGC.org). Check the “Find a Genetic Counselor” box at the bottom of the page. This list may include genetic counselors that are non-participating or employed by the lab.

**8. What if there is no genetic counselor in my area?**

- A.** If there are no qualified providers in your area, we do allow counseling by telephone. Visit [www.informedDNA.com](http://www.informedDNA.com) or call InformedDNA at 1-800-975-4819 (TTY: 711) to access nationwide in-network telephone genetic counseling.

**9. Who should I call if I have additional questions about generic counseling or BRCA testing?**

- A.** Please contact our Customer Care Professionals at the member phone number on your UnitedHealthcare health plan ID card.

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