

Health Pedigrees

Health pedigrees are fast becoming an important thing to do in one's own family. People who are not particularly interested in Genealogy are finding themselves documenting their family for medical reasons. Here are some tips in organizing a health pedigree.

Most health officials recommend a 3 generation pedigree documenting as much health issues as possible. This includes:

Generation 1: Self, spouse, children and their families
Generation 2: Parents, siblings and their families
Generation 3: Grandparents, siblings and their families

Information you should try to document on the above:

Full names, birth, marriage, divorce, remarriages, deaths
Ethnic Backgrounds
Height & Weight
Average amount they drank/smoke/drugs
Health problems: Headaches, asthma, colds, allergies, heart attacks, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancers, strokes, miscarriages, depression, suicide, High cholesterol, major surgeries. Note any other health issues that were not mentioned.

Try to get the dates the events occurred.

Death: Try to find out what caused the medical problem. If they died from a stroke, was it due to a blood clot? High blood pressure? Bleeding in the brain? Send for the death certificate: you may have to specifically ask for the cause of death or it may not be included.

Knowing these medical issues shown in family members does not mean you will definitely get this illness/disease. But, it will give you the knowledge to get medical checkups to aid in early intervention if you are prone to get the illness/disease.

Genetics say family medical histories should be documented and stored in a safe place. These records are just as important as birth and marriage documents and wills.

Keep all medical records updated. It is important to share this information with family members. Make copies to take with you when you go to the physician.

The March of Dimes lists the following ills that are thought to be genetic or have a genetic component:

Alcoholism, allergies, arthritis, asthma, atherosclerosis, bacteria pneumonia, emphysema, cancers, birth defects, dwarfism, heart attacks, high blood pressure, liver disease, hemophilia, Huntington's disease, epilepsy, Down's Syndrome, mental illness, muscular dystrophy, obesity, myasthenia gravis, Rh disease, sudden infant syndrome, Tay-Sachs, Thyroid disorders, glaucoma, cataracts, sickle cell anemia, stroke, suicide, migraine headaches, systemic lupus erythematosus

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