

# MAKING SENSE OF YOUR HEALTH RISKS



## What did you hear?



- A family member has a genetic disease
- There is a disease outbreak
- An ad for a new drug is on TV
- Some foods are good for you
- I got my genetic testing kit results
- A friend told me...

## Are you worried?



**Being at risk doesn't mean that something will definitely happen; it is just a possibility. Here are some questions to ask:**

**WHO** does this health news affect? A few people? A lot? People like me?

**WHAT** is the source of this information? Can I trust it?

Are people **WHERE** I live, work, or travel affected?

**WHEN** would this apply to me - always, or just during certain times (such as during pregnancy, while traveling, or in infancy)?

**HOW** certain is this risk?



## What does this mean to you?

**Get PERSPECTIVE on the numbers. How health numbers are used can affect how scary or reassuring something sounds.**  
**EXAMPLE:** Disease X affects 20% of people, or 2 in 10 people.



You could also say Disease X does not affect 80% of people, or 8 in 10 people.

So, think about the numbers both ways.

**Look for the ACTUAL chance of being affected by this health news.**

Read health statements carefully to find, and understand, actual risk.



**UNCLEAR:**  
 "This drug reduces risk by half."

**CLEAR:**  
 "This drug reduces risk from 2% to 1%."

These both mean the same thing. Words like "half" or "double" can be alarming and potentially misleading. Look past those words for numbers and percentages that cite actual risk.

## Take control!

**If you learn you are at increased risk for a disease or condition, take control of the situation.**

**UNDERSTAND** what risk factors you can, and can't, change

Many risk factors can work together to affect your overall health risk. Learning about them will help you decide how to take action.



**DO** your research

Educate yourself. Look at credible information sources, such as [health.nih.gov](http://health.nih.gov).

**TALK** to your health care provider

Write down questions before visiting.

Ask about your health risks, and tell your doctor how hearing this information makes you feel.

Speak up if you don't understand something. Don't leave with unanswered questions.

**BUILD** a support team

Ask family and friends to assist with research or doctor visits.

Contact a specialist.

Join a support group.



### CAN'T CHANGE



Age



Family History



Genes

### MAY BE ABLE TO CHANGE



Sleep



Physical Environment



Social



Screening



Diet



Physical Activity



Habits



Safety