

# **Jewish Genetic Disease Screening**

**November 14, 2011 12pm-8pm - Hillel JUC (corner of Forbes & Craig Streets)  
Register by November 1st at <https://www.victorcenters.org/screenings/> and select  
Pittsburgh Victor Center Partnership Screening**

## **What are Jewish Genetic Diseases?**

Jewish genetic diseases are a group of disorders that occur with higher frequency in the Jewish population. The Ashkenazi Jews, those whose ancestors were from Central and Eastern Europe (i.e. Poland, Russia, Germany, Lithuania, etc.) are at higher risk than the general population. This is primarily due to the fact that the Jewish communities in Europe were small and isolated, and members tended to marry within those communities. There are 11 'common' diseases, of which an estimated 1 in 5 Ashkenazi Jews is a carrier. There are seven other less common diseases, which are screened for a more limited basis.

Most of these diseases are extremely devastating and the majority lead to a slow death for a child who rarely lives to the age of 5. If you are a carrier for a disease, it does not mean that you have the disease, but rather that your children may have a chance of having the disease if your partner is also a carrier for the disease.

## **What is Genetic Screening?**

Genetic screening is a process in which, through a simple blood test, a person's genes are examined for changes, called mutations, in specific genes. A person who is found to carry a mutation in one or more Ashkenazi Jewish genetic disease genes is a healthy individual and again, is not at risk to develop the disease. Genetic screening is used to determine whether an individual or couple is at increased risk to have a baby with a hereditary disorder by passing on a gene mutation to their offspring. It is strongly recommended that genetic screening be performed prior to pregnancy to afford the couple the most reproductive options.

## **Why is it important to get tested?**

The primary reason most people get screened for Jewish genetic diseases is because it's important to know whether you and/or your spouse are a carrier for a disease. Right now, many students aren't thinking past the next exam or even semester, let alone getting married or having children, but it's important to consider the future. Typically getting tested for these diseases is very, very expensive (upwards of \$3,000) and rarely covered through insurance. Through a generous grant, the Hillel JUC and Victor Centers of Philadelphia have the ability to test 300 students and young adults (18-29) at NO COST. You will only need to be tested once, so why not register to get tested right now? The Victor Center works with genetic counselors who will stay in touch and give counseling/advice if needed.

## **How can I sign up to be tested?**

You can find more information at [www.victorcenters.org](http://www.victorcenters.org) or reserve your time slot (between 12-8pm on November 14th) by visiting [www.victorcenters.org/screenings](https://www.victorcenters.org/screenings) - select Pittsburgh Victor Center Partnership Screening. You need to register online by November 1st.

## **Insurance and Payment questions?**

Screening is free to all participants. If your insurance covers the cost of screening, our lab will bill your insurance at no expense to you. If your insurance does not cover the cost of screening (or cover screening through the labs we are using), you will be covered through grant funding. Regardless, there will be no expense to the patients. People must sign up in advance to give us the opportunity to look into their coverage and relay this info to the them.

You can contact Brooke Heyman (bnh12@pitt.edu), or Carly Adelman (carlya@hilleljuc.org) for more information before the Dinner and Discussions or for help signing up.