

COUNSELING CHECKLIST FOR RABBIS

Here are some questions which can start a conversation about Jewish genetic disease screening:

Are you thinking of having children? If the couple is of childbearing age and thinking of children, they should be screened.

Do you know about Jewish genetic diseases? Most couples have heard something, but many think it's just Tay-Sachs.

Has either of you been screened for Jewish genetic diseases? If not, they should be screened. If yes, make sure they were screened for all 16 diseases.*

If so, how long ago? Do you know if you were screened for all diseases now included on the panel? The panel has been revised over the past few years from 9 to 11 to 16 diseases. If they aren't fully screened, they should consider a supplemental screening.

Do you understand why it's important to be screened before you start a family? If they're both carriers for the same disease, they want to know before they start a family. That way they'll have the most options available to them for building a healthy family.

Do you know where you would go for screening? In many cases, the woman of the couple will go to her OB/GYN first. She should make sure the doctor is familiar with the screening and offers the full panel. The couple can also go directly to the genetics program of a local hospital, or ask their doctor for a referral.

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As of the writing of this document the JGDC advocates that couples be screened for 16 Jewish genetic diseases. It is likely that additional diseases will be added to the panel in the future. Check JGDCConsortium.org for updates.



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Do either of you know you're a carrier, or have a family history of genetic diseases? If so, they're probably best served by going directly to a genetics program.

Make sure to mention:

- 1 in 5 Ashkenazi Jews is a carrier of at least one of the diseases.** You can be a carrier and not know it, since a carrier is not affected by the disease.
- There are 16 serious diseases.** It's not just Tay-Sachs. Diseases range in severity and impact, but they are all serious. You should be screened for all of them.
- Even if you're both carriers, there are multiple options for building a healthy family.** A genetics counselor can help carrier couples interpret screening results and review their options.
- If only one member of the couple is of Ashkenazi heritage, that member should be screened first.** Even in cases of mixed couples, screening is important.
- Screening should be done before starting a family.** Carrier couples have many more options before conception than they do once the woman is pregnant.

Make sure that all couples leave your office with a copy of the JGDC brochure. For more copies of the brochure, e-mail shari@jgdconsortium.org or call 201-819-7036.

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