

RABBI PLEDGE

There are at least 16 Jewish Genetic Diseases common to Ashkenazi Jews and 1 in 5 Ashkenazi Jews is a carrier for at least one Jewish Genetic Disease. These diseases are largely debilitating and potentially fatal, with limited treatment options and no known cures. However, through education, timely genetic counseling and genetic screening, these tragic diseases can be prevented in future generations, and lead to healthier children and families.

While many Ashkenazi Jewish families are encouraged by their doctors and rabbis to be screened for Jewish Genetic Diseases, far too frequently couples do not receive genetic counseling and screening until they are already pregnant and they are often not tested for all 16 diseases. Regrettably, many physicians screen only for the most common of these diseases, and the lesser-known diseases are often ignored.

Individuals who are carriers of any Jewish Genetic Disease exhibit no symptoms or health problems from their carrier status and they usually have no known family history of Jewish Genetic Disease. Therefore, carriers know of their carrier status only if they are tested or when they have a child born with a disease. These 16 diseases are “autosomal recessive” - meaning that both parents must be carriers of the same genetic disease to be at risk for having an affected child. If both parents are carriers of the same disease, there is a 25% chance of having an affected child with each pregnancy.

Genetic counseling and screening is responsible and accepted according to Halacha, is widely available, and screening for all 16 Jewish Genetic Diseases can be performed with one single blood test. If both members of a couple are found to be carriers of the same genetic disease, a genetic counselor can explain the implications and help guide the couple through the many reproductive choices, potentially eliminating the risk of having a child with a Jewish Genetic Disease.

Regrettably, many families are not fully educated by their doctor or rabbi about the risks of Jewish Genetic Disease and have children suffering from a disease.

Therefore, I _____, pledge that during premarital counseling for all marriages at which I am asked to officiate for couples of childbearing age, I will:

- 1. Discuss with couples the possibility that they may be carriers of one or more Jewish Genetic Disease.**
- 2. Provide information and inform couples about the 16 Jewish Genetic Diseases for which screening is available as of January 2010, and where couples can receive genetic counseling and screening.**
- 3. Advocate to couples that they obtain genetic screening for the full panel of 16 Jewish Genetic Diseases to determine their carrier status prior to officiating at their marriage ceremony.**
- 4. Provide couples with moral and spiritual support as they make decisions about building a healthy family.**

Signed by: _____ *Name:* _____

Affiliation: _____ *Phone:* _____ *Email:* _____

Address: _____

I consent to the use of my picture on the JGDC website www.JGDCConsortium.org. YES NO

Please return your signed pledge by fax to: 973-595-8569, or by mail to: JGDC, 450 West End Ave, NY, NY. 10024

The Jewish Genetic Disease Consortium (JGDC) aims to increase awareness and education about Jewish Genetic Diseases and to encourage timely and complete genetic screening. For information about the JGDC, our programs, Jewish Genetic Diseases, and for rabbinic educational materials, contact the JGDC at (866) 370-GENE (4363), or e-mail info@JGDCConsortium.org or visit www.JGDCConsortium.org.