

# Personal Health Portfolio



## Chapter 1 Creating a Family Health Tree

A family health tree is a diagram of your family's health history over several generations. As such, it can provide important clues to the genes you have inherited from your parents, grandparents, and ancestors. It can also give you an opportunity to think about the context in which your family members lived and how that may have impacted their health. Constructing a family health tree has three broad steps: (1) mapping the family structure, (2) recording family information, and (3) exploring family relationships. Refer to the model provided in Figure 1.9 for a sample tree. An online tool is available at <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action>. You can complete the tree online or create a family health tree on paper.

Once you have gathered all the information, analyze your family health tree by completing the Critical Thinking Questions. You may want to share your family health tree with your siblings and other family members. Depending on what you find, you may want to review your family health tree with your health provider. They may recommend that you modify certain lifestyle behaviors (such as diet or exercise), have a particular screening tests (such as an early test for cancer), or visit a genetic counselor. You may want your family health tree to become part of your medical file for future reference.

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### CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What are your family's strengths? Consider such things as longevity, fitness, mental well-being, etc. What individual, interpersonal, community or policy factors may have contributed to the strengths? Consider where, when and how different generations of your family lived. How might this have influenced their health?
2. Are there patterns of disease or illness in your family? Do certain diseases appear frequently? Does the pattern suggest a possible genetic link? What lifestyle factors may have contributed to illness in your family? Again consider how the environment in which your relatives lived might have contributed to illness.