

Information Sheet



Gardner syndrome: an old term to describe the clinical features of Lynch and Familial Adenomatous Polyposis syndromes

Gardner syndrome is an old term. It was used to describe families with polyps or colon cancer who also had skin problems.

It is named after Dr Eldon John Gardner who published a paper in the American Journal of Human Genetics in 1951 describing a family with multiple bowel polyps (adenoma) and osteofibromas.

It is no longer used as it describes the clinical features of 2 hereditary cancer syndromes that have very different genetic causes and different cancer risks:

- Lynch syndrome
- Familial Adenomatous Polyposis syndrome

In Lynch syndrome the skin lesions are sebaceous adenocarcinomas of the skin and there is also a high risk of colon (bowel), uterine, ovarian and other digestive tract cancers.

By contrast, in Familial Adenomatous Polyposis syndrome individuals present with skin lumps such as epidermoid cysts or lipomas, desmoids (tumour of the connective tissues) and osteomas (benign bone growths, often found in the jaw). In this syndrome, hundreds or even thousands of polyps may occur in the bowel from a very young age and the lifetime risk of colon cancer is 100% if nothing is done to reduce the risk.

Is Gardner syndrome inherited?

Yes. Gardner syndrome is a clinical description of two hereditary cancer syndromes: Familial Adenomatous Polyposis syndrome (caused by a mutation in the APC gene) and Lynch syndrome (caused by a mutation in one of the mismatch repair genes).

There is a 50% chance of a person who carries a germline mutation, whether male or female, passing the mutation to their son or daughter. If a mutation is identified, then predictive testing is available for blood relatives and would be Medicare funded.

Make an appointment with Dr Hilda High at Sydney Cancer Genetics. It is a confidential opportunity to discuss your personal and family history of cancer and genetic testing can be organised, if needed.

More information about Lynch syndrome and Familial Adenomatous Polyposis syndrome is available on our website.

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