FREE PRINTABLE GUIDE

25 questions to ask your parents about their health

Most of a family's health history isn't in a medical file. It's in people's heads. These questions help you write it down while you can still ask.

BEFORE YOU START

How to have the conversation

- Pick a calm moment, not a crisis. A cup of tea or a long car journey works well.
- Say why you're asking: so you, your children and their doctors know what runs in the family.
- You don't need to ask everything at once. Two or three sittings is normal.
- “I don't know” is a useful answer. Ask who might know instead.
- Ages and rough years matter more than exact dates.
- Old photos, letters and medicine boxes help memories come back.

PART 1

Your own health

1 **Have you ever been told you have a long-term condition?**
For example high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, a heart or thyroid problem. How old were you?

2 **Have you had any operations or stays in hospital?**
Roughly when, and what for.

3 **What medicines do you take regularly, and what are they for?**
It helps to photograph the boxes or the repeat prescription.

4 **Are you allergic to any medicines, foods or anything else?**
What happens when you react?

5 **Have you ever had cancer, or a screening test that found something to keep an eye on?**

6 **Have you had any problems with your mental health, such as depression or anxiety?**
Only if you're comfortable talking about it.

7 **Which childhood illnesses and vaccinations do you remember having?**
Measles, mumps, chickenpox, TB jab and so on.

8 **Has a doctor ever said something "runs in the family"?**

PART 2

Your parents

9 **How old were your parents when they died, or how old are they now? What did they die of?**
Ages matter more than exact dates.

10 **Did either of them have heart disease, a stroke or high blood pressure? At what age?**

11 **Did either of them have diabetes, cancer, or memory problems such as dementia?**
Which kind of cancer, if they know.

12 **Did they have problems with eyesight, hearing or bones?**
For example glaucoma, hearing loss, osteoporosis or a broken hip.

13 **Did your mother have any problems in pregnancy or childbirth?**

14 **Did either of them smoke, drink heavily, or work with anything harmful?**
For example asbestos, dust or chemicals.

PART 3

Brothers, sisters and the wider family

15 **Do your brothers or sisters have any long-term conditions?**

16 **What do you know about your grandparents' health, and what they died of?**

17 **Are there conditions that keep coming up among aunts, uncles and cousins?**

18 **Did anyone in the family have a serious illness unusually young?**
For example a heart attack or cancer before 50.

19 **Were any babies or children in the family born with a health condition, or did any die young?**

20 **Is there anything the family didn't talk about?**
Older generations often kept quiet about mental illness, addiction or miscarriage.

PART 4

Practical things

21 **Who is your doctor, and which clinics or hospitals have your records?**

22 **Where are your important papers?**
Letters, test results, vaccination cards, insurance.

23 **If you were too ill to speak for yourself, who should we talk to?**

24 **Are there any wishes about your care that we should know?**

25 **Is there anything about your health you've been meaning to tell us?**
Leave this one until last, and give it time.

> Write down who said what, and when. If a parent isn't sure, note that too. A doctor can tell the difference between "Dad had heart trouble" and "Dad had a heart attack at 52", and both are worth keeping.

Keep the answers together in Family Health Archive, the private family health record for your phone: familyhealtharchive.com

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This guide is for keeping records. It is not medical advice. Talk to a doctor about what your family history means for you.