

Should women with high risk BRCA mutation follow Angelina Jolie's path?

Angelina Jolie has done wonders for raising awareness about the so-called “breast cancer gene”—the infamous BRCA1 mutation that can greatly boost a woman's risk of breast, ovarian, and other cancers.

But with that awareness can come increased anxiety. I am one of the many women in this country who fear they could be a carrier. I recently had my DNA tested through the biotech company 23andMe, and a third-party analysis revealed that I *might* have harmful mutations on my BRCA1 gene, which *might* raise my cancer risk. My mother was adopted, so I lack a complete picture of my family's medical history. What do I do with this information?

Of course, not every woman who tests positive for harmful mutations will get cancer—but one's odds are significantly increased. Fifty-five to 65 percent of women who have the BRCA1 mutation and about 45 percent who have the BRCA2 mutation will develop breast cancer by the time they're 70. About 39 percent of women with the BRCA1 mutation and 11 to 17 percent with the BRCA2 mutation will get ovarian cancer by 70.

By comparison, in the general population, only about 12 percent of women will develop breast cancer and 1.4 percent of women will develop ovarian cancer. So testing for these genes can be a life saving precaution.

Read full, original article: High anxiety: What if you think you might have the ‘cancer gene’?