

Dear Family Member,

One of our family members is under medical care for hemochromatosis (pronounced he-mo-kro-ma-TOE-sis), a genetic condition that causes the body to absorb too much iron. Because you are a family member related by birth (blood relation), you may have inherited the genes that can cause this disease.

During the early stages of hemochromatosis, most people do not feel sick and cannot tell they have the disease. Without treatment, however, iron can build up in the heart, joints, or pancreas and cause permanent damage. The good news is that complications from hemochromatosis can be prevented if it is found and treated early.

To find out if you have this condition, have your iron status evaluated by your family doctor within the next few months. Two simple blood tests can determine if you have too much iron in your blood: transferrin saturation and serum ferritin. If test results show that you have too much iron, you will need to begin phlebotomy [pronounced flee-BOT-o-me] treatment. This is a safe, simple, and very effective treatment. On a regular basis, patients have blood taken from a vein in the arm, just like donating blood. With proper treatment, people with hemochromatosis can lead long, healthy lives.

Please do not ignore this letter. The special blood tests you need are very simple. Remember, many people who have hemochromatosis feel fine. Finding the disease EARLY is important. Be sure to ask your doctor for these blood tests and talk with your doctor about the results.

Sincerely,

You can learn more about hemochromatosis on the Internet at the website provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hemochromatosis>

(Free access to the Internet is available at your local public library.)



Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

