

Your Adopted Child's Genetic Heritage

How concerned should you be?

With so much media focus on genetic predispositions to various illnesses, many adoptive parents (and those considering it) are concerned that they don't know their child's family medical history.

"It's not essential to have that information," says Sarah Stevens, M.D., adolescent medicine specialist at Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network and mother of three children from Ecuador. "If a hereditary condition or illness shows up, the doctors will determine how to deal with it, as they do with people who grew up in their birth families but don't know their family medical history." What's most important, she says, is following a healthy lifestyle—whether you know your genetic heritage or not.

Nicholas Jupina, therapist at the hospital's Adolescent Transitions Program, agrees. "When my wife and I were considering adopting children from South Korea, we gave some thought to genetics," he says, "but just decided to take the risk. After all, you really have no guarantees when you conceive a child."

Regular pediatric check-ups and health screenings are important for all children.



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