

MEDICAL CARE FOR ADOPTEES:

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE'S LITTLE KNOWN HISTORY

Many adoptees are placed with very little documentation about their own medical history or the medical and mental health history of their birth family members. The fallout for these adoptees is a lifetime of confusion and frustration whenever they access medical care.

Without a full medical history, it can be challenging to help an adopted child access accurate, complete diagnoses and appropriate treatments. Even an annual physical can be a source of frustration as pediatricians ask questions in order to fill all the blanks in the adopted child's medical chart.



Adoptees in open adoption situations benefit from contact with birth family members who can keep them updated on medical and mental health issues arising within the family. Those adopted in closed situations are more likely to seek out birth family members through the use of search services or DNA/ancestry websites. Missing medical information is the number one driver of adoptee search journeys. This is especially true as adoptees become adults.

It is important for adoptees to have ongoing access to developments in their birth family's medical history. A birth parent in their teens or early-20's may have few diagnosed health concerns, but might have several emerging issues as they enter their 40's, 50's, or 60's. Having ongoing contact will allow for sharing of these details as they develop.

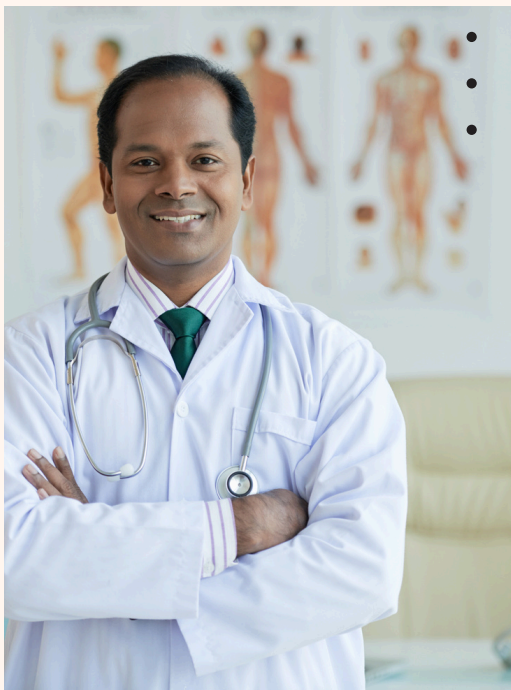


ADVOCACY IS KEY

QQ What to ask the doctor?

Come prepared when attending the child's intake appointment. Here are a few questions to ask:

- What do we need to watch for based on the factors we already know?
- How can we assess for immediately identifiable things that could be in the child's background (diabetes, Sickle Cell, BRCA cancer risk, etc.)?
- At what age might we expect symptoms to emerge based on the risk factors we were informed about?
- Would our child's situation qualify him/her for a referral to receive genetic testing/counseling?
- Document any concerning symptoms, including onset, severity, duration, and frequency.



For more details or additional assistance, reach out to your LFCS adoption caseworker or email help@lfcs.org.



For adoptive parents and adult adoptees, there are a few recommendations for easing the burden of a missing medical history:

- Seek out a doctor who is familiar with adoption and well-versed in treating patients with an adoption history.
- Look for a medical practice that is adoption-sensitive, including their intake forms.
- Adoptive parents can request for their pediatrician to complete regular vision, hearing, and developmental screenings so they can ensure the child is meeting age-appropriate expectations.
- Adoptive parents might be able to work with their agency to request additional details from birth parents, if the adoption is not closed.
- Be prepared to tell each new provider or specialist that your child has missing details about their medical history due to their adoption circumstances.