

Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor - GIST - Risk Factors [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 12/2014

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing this type of tumor. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of developing a tumor. Although risk factors often influence the development of a tumor, most do not directly cause the disease. Some people with several risk factors never develop a tumor, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

The majority of GISTs develop for no known reason, called sporadic. Doctors are rarely able to find a specific risk factor for patients diagnosed with a GIST, other than the hereditary syndromes discussed below.

Age. GISTs most often occur in people older than 50.

Gender. GISTs are slightly more common in men than in women.

Family history. GISTs rarely run in families, and having a family member with a GIST does not always increase your risk of developing the disease. Hereditary syndromes that *can* increase the risk of GISTs include [neurofibromatosis Type 1](#) [3] (NF1) and Carney-Stratakis dyad.

Genetics. Most often, a GIST, including non-hereditary tumors, develops because of genetic mutations or changes. The two most common genes affected are called *KIT* and *platelet-derived growth factor receptor (PDGFR)*. Increasingly, researchers are finding other mutations, such as a protein called succinate dehydrogenase (SDH), or *BRAF*, a gene occasionally changed in people with melanoma or colorectal cancer. Testing for these mutations may be available at hospitals that specialize in treating a GIST. Researchers continue to look for specific genes and other syndromes that may be related to the development of GISTs and which may be used to help choose a patient's treatment options.

Because no non-hereditary, preventable risk factors have been found, there is no good way to prevent GIST development.

To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.

Links:

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/gastrointestinal-stromal-tumor-gist/risk-factors>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19450>