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Do parents fear gene tests for kids

With direct-to-consumer genetic testing now widely available, many **health** professionals have wondered how families with **children** will deal with the results of genetic testing. Will parents worry excessively if test results suggest a high risk of disease in a **child**?

A new study sheds some light on the issue and finds, surprisingly, that information from family history and from genetic testing caused equal amounts of concern among parents about their children's risk. The researchers, from the **University** of Michigan, had hypothesized that parents would place a greater value on genetic tests, and worry more. But when asked about hypothetical situations in which they learned they or their children were at high risk for developing a disease, the 1,342 parents surveyed were not overly concerned about information from a genetic test.

The study, published this week in the Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, shows that one's perception of disease risk is not just influenced by numbers but by a variety of cognitive and emotional factors. For example, parents were more likely to be worried about their own health when information came from family history as opposed to a genetic test. "Parents interpreted risk differently for themselves than for their children," said the study's lead author, Dr. Beth A. Tarini, an assistant professor of pediatrics at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. "For parents, family history -- in effect, one's observed genetic destiny -- trumped disease risk as measured by genetic tests."