

# Phone counseling helps rural women with cancer gene tests

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Telephone could be a lifeline for these patients, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—Telephone counseling on genetic testing is as effective as in-person counseling for women at high risk for breast or ovarian cancer, a new study finds.

While in-person genetic counseling is available for many women in cities, that's typically not the case for women in [rural areas](#), the researchers noted.

This study included 988 women at risk for hereditary breast and/or [ovarian cancer](#). All received a personalized brochure and other materials about [genetic testing](#), and a genetic counselor reviewed the materials with each woman.

About half the women met the counselor in person, while the other half talked with the counselor on the phone. The women were surveyed a

week after counseling.

Women were more likely to choose genetic testing after in-person counseling, but the researchers found no difference between in-person and phone counseling in terms of women's levels of knowledge gained about genetic testing or in their anxiety, distress or quality of life.

One reason why more women chose genetic testing after in-person counseling might be because they were able to give a DNA sample and have it sent for testing immediately, the researchers suggested.

"This research shows that using the telephone is a viable alternative to in-person genetic counseling," study author Anita Kinney, of the University of New Mexico Cancer Center, said in a university news release.

"Using the phone, we can effectively increase [women's](#) access to genetic counseling services. And that can help them make informed and lifesaving decisions for their health no matter where they live," she said.

The study was published recently in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

**More information:** The American Cancer Society has more about [genetic testing](#).

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