Invention Of the Year

Your genome used to be a closed book. Now a simple, affordable test can shed new light on everything from your intelligence to your biggest health risks. Say hello to your DNA—if you dare

BY ANITA HAMILTON

What Your Gene Test Can Tell You

- Above-average odds of living to 100
- Short-term memory is average
- If she was breast-fed, her IQ is slightly higher than average
- Above-average risk for glaucoma
- 4% chance of getting age-related macular degeneration
- Has wet earwax
- Can taste bitterness in broccoli and cabbage
- Average odds of getting throat cancer
- Less than 1.4% chance of getting melanoma, the most dangerous kind of skin cancer
- If she is a smoker, she probably lights up a little less frequently than other smokers
- 0.5% chance of getting esophageal cancer
- Because she metabolizes caffeine slowly, she is more sensitive to its stimulating effects
- Might have an elevated risk of a nonfatal heart attack due to slow caffeine metabolism
- Not resistant to malaria
- Less than 1% chance of getting stomach cancer
- Below-average odds of blood vessels narrowing as a result of peripheral artery disease
- Drinking black or green tea is moderately likely to reduce her chance of getting breast cancer
- Not resistant to HIV/AIDS
- Average odds of having an irregular heartbeat due to atrial fibrillation
- Slightly elevated odds of getting the autoimmune disorder Sjogren’s syndrome, which affects up to 4 million Americans
- 10% to 20% chance of getting gallstones
- 10% lifetime chance of getting colorectal cancer
- Average chance of getting cluster headaches
- Face does not flush red when she’s tipsy
- 85% chance of having brown eyes
- 14% chance of having green eyes
- Average sensitivity to sweaty odors
- 1% chance of getting mouth cancer
- Does not have a sweet tooth
- Less than 0.3% chance of getting larynx cancer
- Higher than 10% odds of having dyslexia
- Less likely than average to get asthma
- 14.5% chance of having a heart attack
- 6% chance of getting lung cancer
- 12% chance of developing breast cancer
- Probably lactose tolerant
- 10% or lower chance of getting kidney disease
- 13% chance of getting dry, itchy skin from psoriasis
- Not resistant to the stomach-flu virus known as norovirus
- Regulates blood-sugar levels normally
- Below-average chance of back pain due to lumbar-disk disease
- Typical odds of remission from depression when treated with Celexa or Paxil
- 0.08% chance of getting the bowel disease called Crohn’s
- 20% to 70% chance of sexual dysfunction when taking certain antidepressants
Before meeting with Anne Wojcicki, co-founder of a consumer gene-testing service called 23andMe, I know just three things about her: she’s pregnant, she’s married to Google’s Sergey Brin, and she went to Yale. But after an hour chatting with her in the small office she shares with co-founder Linda Avey at 23andMe’s headquarters in Mountain View, Calif., I know some things no Internet search could never reveal: coffee makes her giddy, she has a fondness for sequined shoes and fresh-baked bread, and her unborn son has a 50% chance of inheriting a high risk for Parkinson’s disease.

Learning and sharing your genetic secrets are at the heart of 23andMe’s controversial new service—a $399 saliva test that estimates your predisposition for more than 90 traits and conditions rang-