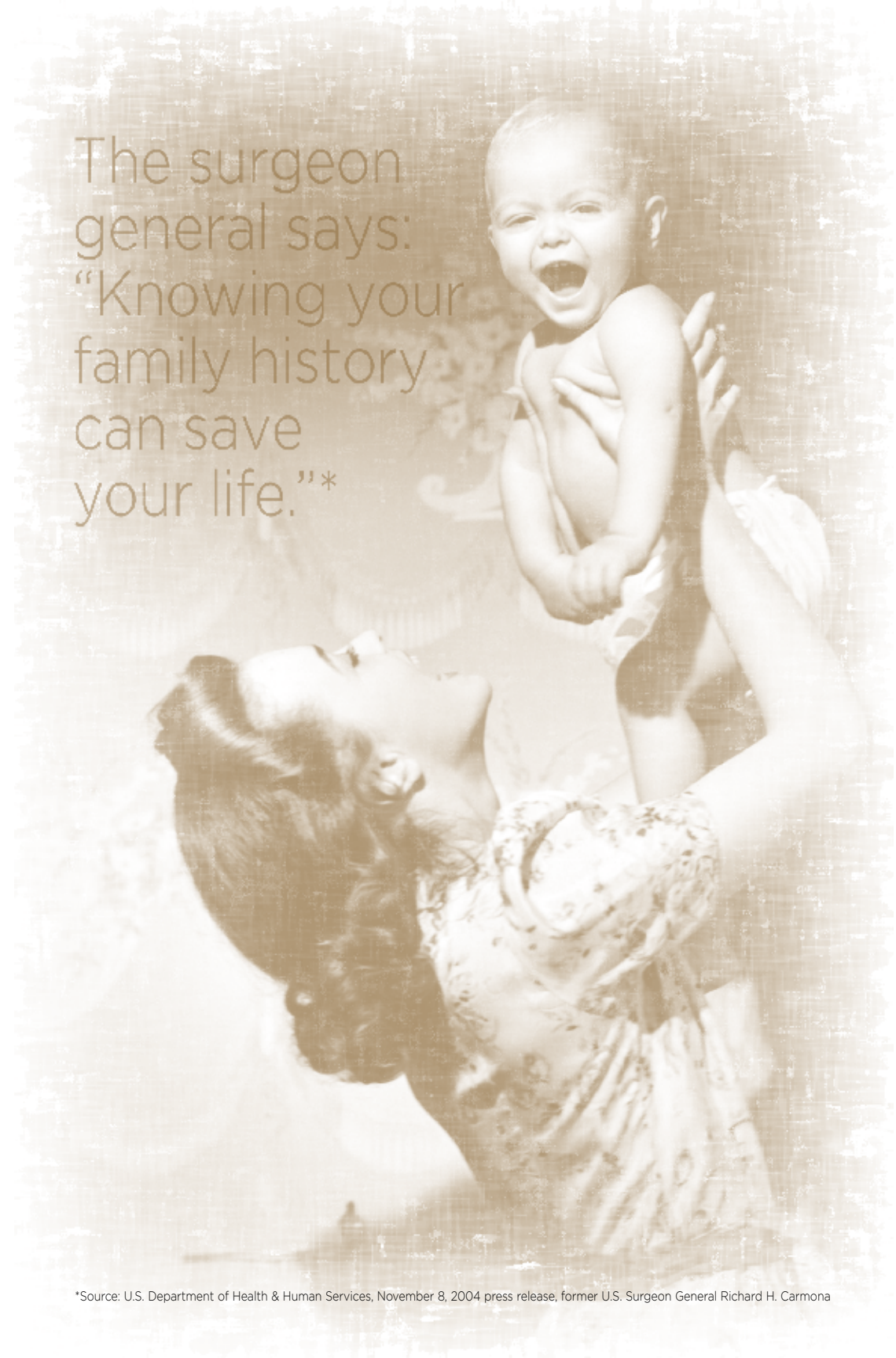


A large, dark footprint is stamped into the sand, extending from the top of the frame down towards the center. The sand is a warm, golden-brown color. The text 'knowing your past can influence your future' is written in a white, serif font across the middle of the footprint. A smaller, more distinct footprint is visible in the lower right corner of the image.

knowing your past can influence your future

A sepia-toned photograph of a woman lifting a baby into the air. The woman is looking up at the baby with a joyful expression. The baby is laughing with its mouth wide open. The background is a soft, out-of-focus pattern.

The surgeon
general says:
“Knowing your
family history
can save
your life.”*

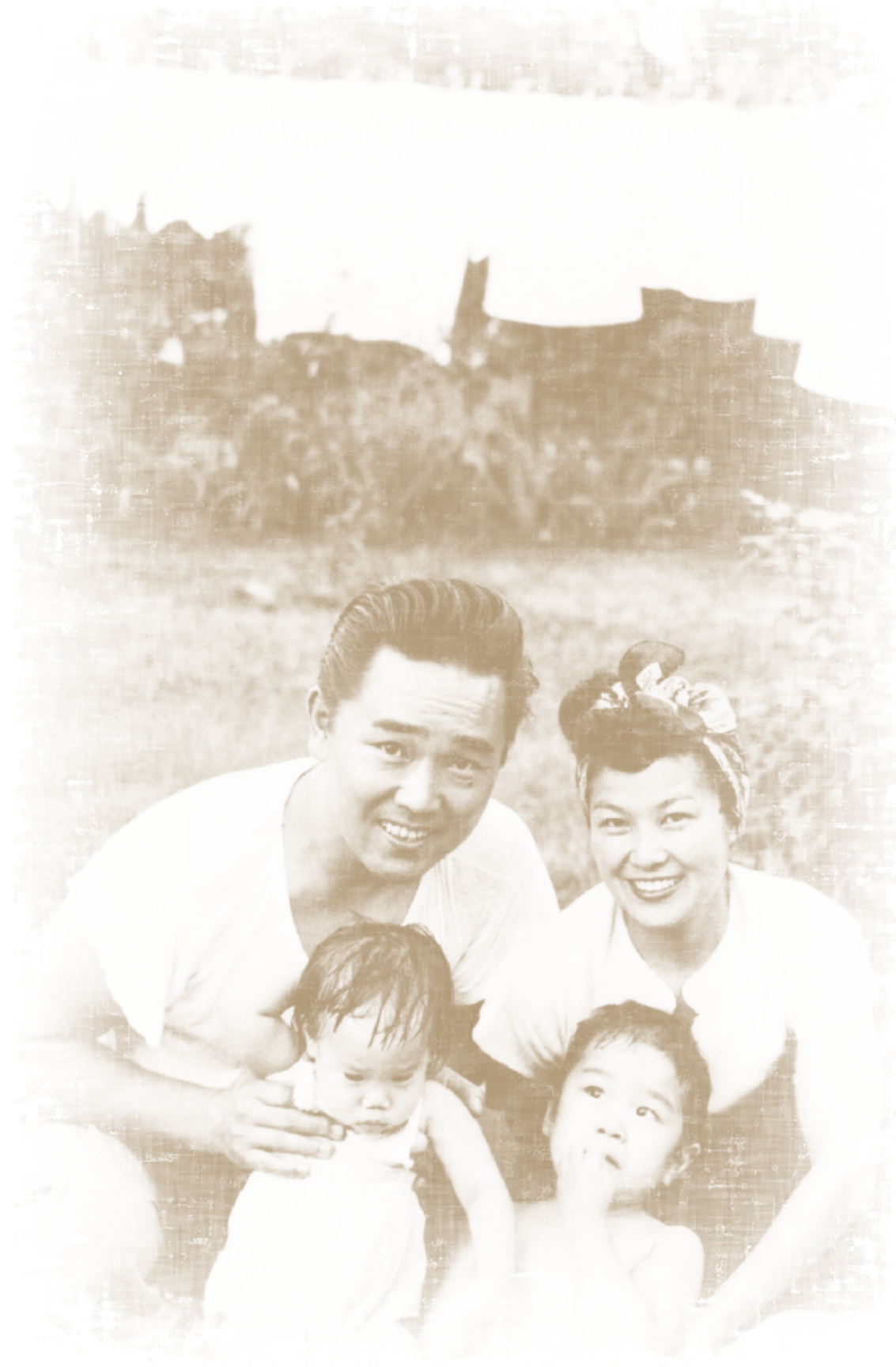
You wouldn't take a long trip or plan a vacation without knowing something about the destination or how to get there. Not having a good road map makes it even more difficult to chart your course. The same goes for your health and the choices you make. Knowledge of your own genetic “road map” allows you to select the best route to a healthier life. Each family and ethnic group is genetically different. You need to work with your healthcare provider to explore any preexisting conditions or risk factors that may affect your health.

What is family health history?

- A record of shared genes and shared environment
- An independent risk factor for most chronic diseases of public health significance
- A tool that enables patients and providers to work together for improved health outcomes

Why is it important?

- Health problems run in families
- It helps you know what your risk may be and can guide screening tests and behavior change
- Family history may be a “risk factor” in all stages of life. “Risk factors” are things that can increase your chance of developing a health problem
- Genetics. Genes give the directions for making proteins in our bodies. Proteins make our bodies function. Genes are passed down from parents to children. Some genes may not work correctly, which can lead to disease.



Reduce your risk to serious health issues.

Your family history holds key information about your past and clues to your future health. Many of your physical traits (such as eye color, hair color, and height) are inherited. So, too, are risks for certain genetic conditions and health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

You may have noticed that some of your relatives are healthier and live longer than other relatives. You may also have noticed that some relatives have the same health problems. By collecting your family's health history, you can learn what health problems you may be at increased risk for in the future and how to reduce your risks. Finding out your family history can benefit both you and your relatives ... and it can be fun too!

Please use the worksheet on the following pages to map out your family health history and then talk to your healthcare provider to help you design a personalized plan for maintaining your health.

We all have a family history of something!

The Surgeon General has provided a tool to help make it easy for you to create a portrait of your family's health. The following Family Health worksheet will help you organize your family tree and provide a record to identify common diseases that may run in families. Use this information to fill out the online version at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory.


Type of information to include:

- Major medical conditions & cause of death (where applicable)
- Age of person at disease onset
- Age of person if/when deceased from disease
- Ethnic background

Name: _____

Age: _____

Date: _____

A woman with short, wavy hair is smiling broadly, looking down at a framed photograph she is holding. The photograph shows a young girl in a striped shirt and shorts, sitting on the floor and hugging herself. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

Genes draw
your road map,
but you still chart
your course....

What to do if you have a family history.

- Talk to your healthcare provider about getting regular screenings and risk assessments
- Make a plan to preserve your health
- Engage in healthy behavior

You can't change your genes, but you can change behaviors that affect your health, such as smoking, inactivity and poor eating habits. People with a family history of chronic disease may have the most to gain from making lifestyle changes. In many cases, making these changes can reduce your risk of disease even if the disease runs in your family.

Another change you can make is to participate in screening tests—such as mammograms and colorectal cancer screening—for early detection of disease. People who have a family history of a chronic disease may benefit the most from screening tests that look for risk factors or early signs of disease. Finding disease early, before symptoms appear, can mean better health in the long run.

Congratulations... you are now on your way to a better understanding of your health. Contact your healthcare provider to discuss your family health history and make a personalized plan to preserve your good health.



Knowing your family
history can save your life.
The earlier you know which
health conditions run in
your family, the easier it is
to develop prevention plans
with your doctor.

Dr. Richard H. Carmona,
Former U.S. Surgeon General



Know your past.
Act in the present.
Protect your future.

www.hhs.gov/familyhistory

For more detailed information on Family Health History, visit www.ct.gov/dph and type “family health history” in the DPH search box. Or call (860) 509-8000.



Keeping Connecticut Healthy

Connecticut Department of Public Health -
State Health Planning Section

J. Robert Galvin, MD, MPH, MBA, *Commissioner*
www.ct.gov/dph

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