

Our obligations

We are committed to providing you with information that clearly explains genetic testing so you are able to provide an informed consent.

Section A – Testing and results

What is genetic testing?

DNA is the chemical that makes up your chromosomes and genes in the cells of your body.

Genes provide genetic information that the body uses to develop, grow and work.

Genetic testing looks at the DNA in your genes, usually examining just one gene or a panel of a number of genes rather than all of your 20,000 genes.

What are doctors looking for in DNA?

Doctors look for changes in the genetic information that are known to make some genes faulty.

What is a gene fault?

A gene fault is a change in a person's DNA code that may cause or increase the risk for developing a condition.

A gene fault is also called a **pathogenic variant** or a **mutation**.

What does it mean to be born with a gene fault?

We are all born with a number of differences in our 20,000 genes. That is why we are all unique.

These gene changes may be inherited or occur for the first time in you. Usually these gene changes do not cause a problem.

However, sometimes a gene change in one or more genes can cause the gene/s to be faulty which can:

- Directly cause a condition to develop in a baby, child, adolescent or an adult;
- Make a person at increased risk of developing the condition, but noting that they might never develop it at all.



What is required for genetic testing?

Your doctor will explain the test and you will have an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers. The doctor will then ask for your written consent before testing.

Doctors can take DNA from the blood or other tissues to examine in the laboratory. If a blood sample is needed, 5–20 mL (1–2 tubes) is taken for testing.

In some cases, testing blood samples from other genetic relatives may be needed to help understand the results.

You have the right at any time to withdraw your consent, without affecting the quality of your treatment.

What will the test results mean?

Sometimes testing does not give you an answer, or it may reveal information you may not want to know.

Testing may also find DNA changes which are not yet fully understood and therefore doctors may not yet understand what they mean for your health.



What are the test types and possible outcomes?

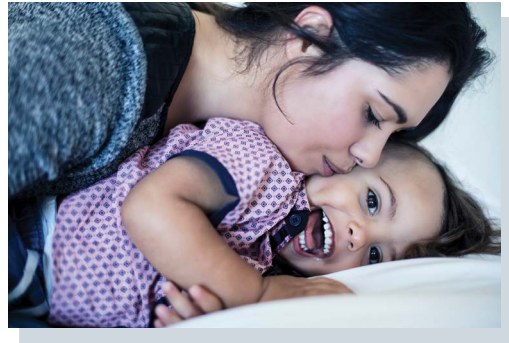
- **Diagnostic Test** – when a gene fault has not yet been found in any other family member
 - **A positive result:** A gene fault is found that is consistent with causing the genetic condition in the family. This is called a pathogenic variant or mutation. This may be important information for you, your genetic relatives and future children.
 - **An uninformative result:** No gene changes are found that could explain the genetic condition. This may be because:
 - ▶ A gene fault is present but could not be found using current technology;
 - ▶ A fault is present in another gene that was not tested;
 - ▶ Not all gene faults that cause the genetic condition have been identified. Testing in the future may happen as knowledge of genetic variations increases. The timeframe for this is unknown.
 - **A result of uncertain significance:** One or more gene changes have been found, but it is not clear what they mean.
 - ▶ Further testing/analysis may be performed in the future as our knowledge of genetics improves.
 - ▶ In this situation, testing of other genetic relatives may help to find out if the result causes the genetic condition.

Section C – Confidentiality

What will your DNA or test result be used for after testing?

Your DNA will only be used for the purpose for which you have given consent except where information is lawfully required or authorised under law.

- Your **identified DNA or blood/tissue sample** will not be used for any other purpose without your written consent except in situations where disclosure is lawfully required or authorised under law;
e.g. In accordance with the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW), genetic information can be used and disclosed without consent in order to lessen or prevent a serious risk to the life, health or safety of a genetic relative no further removed than 3rd degree; and, only where the disclosure is made in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Information and Privacy Commission NSW www0.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/lib/2014/IB2014_065.html



- Your **identified test result and the fact that you have had a genetic test** will not be revealed to any other person or organisation not involved in your care without your written consent except in situations where disclosure is lawfully required or authorised by law.
- Your **non-identifiable DNA sample/ clinical information/test result** may be lawfully used without your consent for:
 - Research purposes (see the Privacy Leaflet for Patients of NSW Health Genetics Services).
 - Quality activities and education where use is allowed under national pathology accreditation requirements.

Section D – Research

Why is it important for your DNA and testing results to be used for research?

DNA testing gives information for you and your genetic relatives and also helps doctors, scientists and genetic counsellors learn more about gene changes and the causes of health problems.

The meaning of gene changes identified in the DNA is still developing. Being able to study DNA from many different people affected with different genetic conditions or with a variety of health problems will help that understanding.

How will the test results be stored for research purposes?

It is important that researchers from all over the world share their findings through databanks to increase understanding. Qualified researchers from the government, academic, commercial or other organisations can then use the information to look at links between the test results and genetic conditions.

What about your privacy and confidentiality?

It is unlikely that there will be risks to your privacy and confidentiality by sharing your results with these databanks. There are many safeguards in place to protect your privacy.

- Results are non-identifiable and sent to researchers with a code number attached.
- Only information that is non-identifiable will be given to databanks.

What are some of the concerns about research?

While every effort is made to protect the privacy of your information, there is a very small chance that your test results could be shared with others by genuine mistake. These include the public, employers, the law or other family members which could impact on family relationships.

DNA test results could identify you if someone already has an **identified DNA** sample from you. They could compare the information from that DNA sample to the non-identifiable information held in the databank.

Information that a research study provides to you may affect your chance to get or renew some forms of insurance (such as life or income insurance).

Section E – Consent

Will I be contacted with any findings from research?

Depending on the research protocol you may not receive any findings from research studies unless they are clinically significant findings. There is usually no direct benefit from taking part in research, however studying your DNA test results will add to science and medical knowledge.

Can I change my mind about using my DNA in research?

You can withdraw your consent at any time if you do not wish your results to be stored in databanks. There will be no consequences from withdrawing your consent. However, results that have already been sent to researchers cannot be taken back from those researchers.

What if I have any other questions?

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your doctor or genetic counsellor.



Contact us

If you have questions regarding this information please speak to your NSW Health genetic health professional.

If you have questions or a complaint about the privacy of your personal information, please contact the Privacy Contact Officer in your local health district, health organisation or specialty health network.

www.health.nsw.gov.au/patients/privacy/Pages/privacy-contact.aspx

Further information

If you would like further information please visit:

Centre for Genetics Education

www.genetics.edu.au

Genetic Alliance Australia

www.geneticalliance.org.au



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