



National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS)

Giving a blood sample

Frequently asked questions



This leaflet gives answers to some of the questions people often ask about giving a blood sample.

If you have any further queries, please ask the biomedical fieldworker.

Biomedical fieldworkers from the National Centre for Social Research follow 'best practice' principles which meet current national standards used within the NHS.

For more info have a look at www.natcen.ac.uk/taking-part/studies-in-field/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey



Why do you need to take a blood sample?



The analysis of the blood samples will tell us a lot about the health of the general population.

The food and drink information you provided will help us understand the eating habits of the nation, including calories and nutrient intake.

However, there is some information that we can't get from what you told us you had to eat and drink. The blood sample will help us complete the picture.

Because the amount of vitamins and minerals absorbed in the body varies from person to person, a blood sample is the only way we can accurately measure vitamin and mineral intake such as vitamin D and iron, which are both very important to health. This is especially important for children, as they often have low levels of key nutrients, for example if they don't eat certain foods. It is especially important that we know if the number of children with low levels of important nutrients is changing in the UK. We can only do this if we measure nutrient levels in their blood. We can also look at people's risk for certain conditions. Serum cholesterol, for example, tells us about risk for heart disease.

What will I need to do?



The biomedical fieldworker will visit at a time that is convenient for you.

We will ask you to sign a consent form to say you and/or your child agrees to provide a blood sample. If a blood sample is given, we will also ask whether you are willing for any remaining blood to be stored for future research.

The biomedical fieldworker will speak to you about fasting overnight (for those 11 years and over). This means not eating or drinking anything (including supplements) other than water for a minimum of 8 hours before the blood sample is taken. For those who are pregnant, diabetic, aged under 11 years or not willing to fast, the biomedical fieldworker will speak to you about providing a non-fasting sample. If you are not asked to fast, please avoid taking any vitamin or mineral supplements in the 8 hours before you give a blood sample.

The blood samples you give will be analysed by research laboratories and subsequently stored and looked after according to ethically approved conditions.

How much blood will I give?

The biomedical fieldworker will take no more than 12-35ml (2 tsp- 7 tsp) of blood depending on your or your child's age.

What do I get for providing a blood sample?



If you wish to receive them, we will send you the results of your and/ or your child's blood

measurements (e.g. vitamin levels and cholesterol).

As a token of our appreciation, each person providing a blood sample will receive a £25 Love2Shop gift card.

What about hygiene standards?



In line with NHS best practice principles, our biomedical fieldworkers maintain the highest

hygiene standards to reduce any risk of infection. We use single use and sterile equipment for every person which is appropriate to the age of the person giving a blood sample. Our biomedical fieldworkers will follow the latest Government guidance related to Covid-19 and other respiratory infections.

What if I feel faint?

Most people do not feel faint during or after giving a blood sample but occasionally people do. If previously you have felt faint when giving a blood sample, please let the fieldworker know so they can best support you, i.e. you may prefer to lie down when the sample is taken.

Does it hurt?



Our biomedical fieldworkers are very experienced in taking blood samples. You should hardly feel anything other than a scratch.

However, some people do see this as being more painful than a scratch. Please tell the biomedical fieldworker immediately if you are at all concerned. If you would like, we may be able to use a skin-numbing agent – the biomedical fieldworker can explain more about this.

Our biomedical fieldworkers are also specially trained to take blood from children and they can help make it easier for children who might be frightened of needles by using a cream or spray to numb the arm.



Will I get a bruise?

The fieldworker will make every attempt to avoid bruising but it does sometimes occur. The skin area around any bruise may be slightly uncomfortable for a day or so but usually no action is required. To reduce any risk of bruising, where possible, we suggest you avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for at least two hours after you have given your blood sample.

It's unlikely that you will have any adverse effects, however if you experience any of the following, you should seek further help, for instance from your GP or NHS 111:

- Severe pain
- Numbness or persistent 'pins and needles' in the arm, hand or fingers
- Swelling which is large or increasing in size
- Bruising which gets worse (for example hurts more or gets much bigger)
- Painful redness/inflammation.

Thank you for your interest and time.

Your contribution is very valuable to the NDNS study.

Any Questions?



Our biomedical fieldworker will try to answer any questions you have. If you have any questions about taking part, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Beverley Bates

NDNS Research Director
National Centre for Social Research,
Unit 15, Ashton Gate
Ashton Road, Harold Hill,
Romford, Essex RM3 8UF

Survey Enquiry Team:

0800 652 4572

Email: ndns@natcen.ac.uk

For more info have a look at www.natcen.ac.uk/taking-part/studies-in-field/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey

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