

Further Information

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Birmingham Women's 
NHS Foundation Trust

DNA Banking

Saving your DNA for the future

An information leaflet for
individuals with a family
history of cancer

If you need more advice please contact:

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Why have I been given this leaflet?

You may have been given this leaflet because you have been referred to the Genetics Service with a family history of cancer. Alternatively, one of your relatives may have been seen by the Genetics Service and suggested you would be happy for us to contact you.

What is DNA Banking?

DNA is the substance that contains all your genetic instructions. You inherit these from your parents and you pass them on to your children.

DNA banking allows you to store some of your genetic material in case genetic testing can be offered in the future. We take a small sample of your blood and send it to our Genetics Laboratory. They remove the DNA from your blood and keep it in safe storage.

What is the purpose of DNA Banking?

DNA banking provides families with the chance to pursue genetic testing some time in the future.

Genetic testing involves looking at DNA for changes. These changes may mean some members of the family could have an increased risk of developing a hereditary illness or disorder such as cancer.

Who do we offer DNA banking to?

DNA banking is usually offered to individuals who have had cancer. This may be because no genetic test can be offered at present. It allows the family to take advantage of future advances in genetic testing.

We also offer DNA banking if a full clinical assessment is not possible. This might be because a family member is seriously ill or having treatment. Banking ensures a sample of their DNA is available for future testing which may help the rest of the family. The family can then focus on their relative's care or treatment. This allows us to defer any decisions about testing until the family is ready.

Some individuals choose to store DNA if they don't want to have genetic testing at the moment. They may want to consider testing at some point in the future to help their relatives.

Where will my DNA be banked?

Your DNA sample will be stored in the Genetics Laboratory at Birmingham Women's Hospital.

Who may use my banked DNA?

Only you, or other family members will be able to request the sample is tested. It may be used for tests requested by you, or by your relatives in the event of your death. You will have an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of testing before making any decisions.

What happens now?

If you have been given a consent form and blood pack with this leaflet and wish to bank DNA you need to sign and return the consent form. You will also have been sent a form to have a blood sample taken at your GP or local hospital. If you are currently having treatment or other blood samples taken, you could have this done at the same time. Your hospital or GP can send the sample back to us. We may have included some packaging to make this easier.

If you are currently having chemotherapy, it would be better to have the sample taken at least four weeks after your treatment has finished. This will give your white blood cells a chance to recover.

If you have received a banking pack and do not wish to bank DNA, please let us know so we can update our records and ensure you are not sent any further requests.

If you have received this leaflet on its own and wish to bank DNA please contact us on the telephone number at the end of the leaflet so we can send you the appropriate forms.

If you decide to bank DNA, we will let you know when your blood sample has been received and your DNA banked. You may want to keep that letter safe as it will have your reference number on it and tell you how to contact us.