

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DNA and DONATING a SALIVA SAMPLE

Why are you collecting saliva?

- > The goal of this study is to study how specific genes influence cognitive abilities and how they change over age. To do this, we plan to measure the genes in DNA from saliva samples.
- > In the past, DNA was usually collected using blood samples. Now we are easily able to obtain DNA from saliva. Most people prefer to provide saliva rather than a blood sample, since it is simple, doesn't require a needle, and the sample can be sent through the regular mail.

What will be done with the saliva?

- > When we receive the saliva samples in the mail, we will check off that you returned it, and deliver the tube to the laboratory. The laboratory will not have your name or any information about your identity.
- > The laboratory will process the saliva to extract the DNA.

What will be done with the DNA?

- > After it is removed from the saliva, the DNA will be frozen and stored at USC until it is ready for analysis. When ready, small amounts of DNA are placed on glass plates and analyzed using genotyping machines.

Will you learn if I or my family members will develop dementia?

- > At this time, there is no single gene known to determine whether someone will develop dementia. A few genes have been found to increase risk for dementia, but the effects seem to be small – just a few percentage points. Age and health history are better predictors of dementia than the genes we plan to study.

Can I find out the results of the genetic analyses?

- > We will not be able to provide individuals with specific information about their genotypes. At this time, any information obtained from this research would not provide meaningful information about your future health.
- > We will be happy to tell you about the genetic results based on the entire group of participants, once the results are available.

Who will have access to my genetic information?

- > Only our research team will have access to your genetic information. The laboratory

personnel who analyze the DNA will not have access to your identity, and will thus not be able to link genotyping information. We will not provide results of genetic research to anyone without your written permission.

Can you make a clone from a DNA sample?

> The DNA contained in saliva is from skin cells from the inside of the mouth. These cells are continuously being shed and then replaced by new cells. The cells in saliva are dead and DNA collected this way cannot be used to make clones or grow new tissue (cell lines).

Can my employer or health insurance provider discriminate against me with these findings?

> There have been concerns about the possibility of discrimination based on genetic findings. To date, this has not been a significant problem for research participants. Federal and State laws provide some protection against employment or health insurance discrimination based on genetic findings. Also, we will not provide results of genetic research to anyone, including your employer and health insurer, without your written permission.

Why can't I eat or smoke before giving the sample?

> This precaution is taken to ensure a clean saliva sample.

Does the sample need to be refrigerated or frozen before I send it back?

> The kit includes a preservative and the sample can be stored and mailed without being frozen or requiring other special handling.

What if I'm on medication?

> Medication will not affect the DNA we extract from your saliva. Some medication may slow down/speed up the saliva collection process, but it will not affect the analysis of the sample.

How long will it take to give a sample?

> It usually takes about 5 minutes to produce enough saliva for the sample. The time may also vary depending on what type of medication you are on and whether you use the sugar packet to induce salivating.