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National Health and Nutrition Examination Study

Overview

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) is conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We designed the survey to learn about the health and nutrition of people in the United States.

Our survey is unique. It combines an interview with health measurements that are done in special mobile exam centers. These centers travel across the country, each with its own highly trained medical team. The team looks at special health topics. We use the most up-to-date methods and equipment for medical exams and lab tests.

Why is this health survey important?

We use the data gathered in this survey to find out the number of people with certain health problems—for example, diabetes and high blood pressure. We look at diet and other habits that affect health, such as smoking and exercise. NHANES provides health and nutrition information on people of all ages. It is also used by those who design health programs and services, and the survey expands our knowledge about the health of people in the United States.

What do I gain by taking part in the exam?

- Free health test results.
- The chance to help learn more about the health of the Nation.
- A token of thanks for your time and effort.

You may choose to be in the survey, and you may allow your child to be in it, too. That is your choice. There is no penalty if you refuse. You may refuse any part of the exam and you are free to drop out at any time. Also, during the interviews you may choose not to answer every question.

What will I be asked to do at the mobile center?

Upon arriving at the mobile center, you will be asked to change into a two-piece examination outfit. Our medical team will then guide you to private rooms, where we will check your height and weight, blood pressure, and body composition. We will collect blood and urine samples.

If your appointment is scheduled in the morning, we will ask you not to eat or drink anything except water overnight. The health tests may take up to 2 ½ hours. The time spent in the mobile center and the tests you receive will be based on your age and current medical condition. For a full list of exams you may receive, see the Health Measurements List.

After your visit to the NHANES mobile center

You will be asked to participate in two dietary interviews by phone 3-7 days after your visit to the mobile center. All survey participants will be asked to take part in the interviews. An adult will answer questions for children less than 5 years old and will assist children 6-11 years old. Participants 12 years and older will respond for themselves. You, or an adult in your family (if you are between 1-15 years old), will also be asked about food shopping habits in a separate interview. For each of these interviews you will receive a token of thanks for your time and effort.

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Are the tests safe?

The tests are safe. Some tests may cause you slight discomfort. Examples are having a blood sample taken or not eating for 8 hours. For the blood sample, a person will have a small amount of blood drawn from a vein in his or her arm with a needle. We will not ask you to have any test that is wrong for you because of a health problem you have.

We will perform a body composition scan that involves low-dosage x-rays to persons aged 8 years and older. Radiation exposure during this test is equal to a cross-country airline flight or a few days of natural background radiation.

We will get information about periods from girls and women, and those who have started their periods will have a urine pregnancy test. Those with a positive test will not have the body composition scan.

Medical errors and injuries are rare. The NHANES program cannot provide money or other compensation if they occur. However, if you believe you have been harmed as a result of your participation in NHANES, we want to know about it. Please call us at 1-800-452-6115. You also have a right to file a claim under the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S. Code § 2674) with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We can provide you with information about this process. You must file the claim within 2 years after the date you became aware of the personal injury, loss of property, or other damage.

Will you be asked personal questions?

At the mobile center, you will be asked some personal questions in complete privacy. You will answer the questions in a private room on a computer screen. You answer by touching an answer choice on the screen. Like all of the other data we collect, your answers are kept strictly private.

If you are under 18 years of age, we may notify your parents if we have reason to believe you may harm yourself because of sad feelings.

Will I get my results?

You will get a report of your results. If the exam shows urgent health problems, we will notify you at once and refer you for treatment. If an urgent problem is found through your lab tests, we will immediately send that information in a letter to your home address. If you wish, we will also mail routine results to you approximately 3–4 months after the exam. In general, we give results only to persons examined or to the parents or guardians of children. Some results, like those for sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and pregnancy, are not put in writing.

We report positive pregnancy results only to the person tested if she is aged 14 years or over and doesn't already know that she is pregnant. If a girl is younger than 14 and has a positive pregnancy test, we will inform both her and her parent or guardian.

Some test results are not reported because not enough information is currently known to understand their meaning for your health. Better ways to look at some of the tests may be developed in the future. Some of the tests may be read again. We will not report the results of future tests to you.

NHANES does not cover the cost of any health care you may decide to get after the exam. If you have questions about getting your results, please call 1-800-452-6115.

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Will my information be kept private?

We respect your privacy. Public laws keep all information you give private.

Assurance of Confidentiality: We take your privacy very seriously. All information that relates to or describes identifiable characteristics of individuals, a practice, or an establishment will be used only for statistical purposes. NCHS staff, contractors, and agents will not disclose or release responses in identifiable form without the consent of the individual or establishment in accordance with section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 242m) and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018 (Title III of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-435, 132 Stat. 5529 § 302)). In accordance with CIPSEA, every NCHS employee, contractor, and agent has taken an oath and is subject to a jail term of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both if he or she willfully discloses ANY identifiable information about you.

These laws do not allow us to give out data that identifies you or your family without your permission. However, if we find signs of child abuse during an exam, we will report it to the local department of social services or the police.

We will keep all survey data safe and secure. When we share data with our partners, to help prepare and process the data, we do so in a way that protects your privacy as required by law.

How are NHANES data used?

What you tell us, your exam results, and the samples you give are a good resource for health science. Many federal agencies, universities, and other public and private groups use NHANES data and these data may be reported in journals, at major scientific meetings, or through other news media. They use it to help find new cures and treatments for diseases and disabilities. The aim is to make the health of all people better. None of these reports will ever use data that can identify any person who took part in the survey.

NHANES has been used in important national reports. One of these highlights the food we eat. Another tells us about the exposures we have to chemicals in the environment. The survey has also been used to track the number of people who have health conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. Studies using NHANES data can be found on our website, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes/participant.htm>.

Health studies using NHANES can be enhanced by combining your survey records with other data sources. An example is linking your survey results with vital statistics and Medicare claims. To do this, we will ask your permission to collect your Social Security and Medicare numbers. As we stated earlier, we keep this information safe and secure.

Also, we may need to contact you in the future. To do this, we will ask public or private agencies, such as the Post Office, to update us with changes to your home address. In the past, we have called or revisited people who took part in this survey. We may contact you in the future to ask you to be part of other public health studies. Your participation in future studies is voluntary.

Will you test for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

Teenagers (14 years and older) and adults under age 60 will be tested for STDs. We will not put these results in writing, but you can get STD test results a few weeks after the exam.

Before you leave the mobile center, you will be given a toll-free number, a password, and the dates to call for your results. Only you will get your test results by calling in and telling us your password. Parents will not be told their child's STD test results. If your test results show that you have a current health problem, we will talk with you about the results and tell you how to get treatment. We will keep all STD test results completely private, just like all other test results. If you do not want to be tested, you can tell a staff member. For details on the tests, please see the Health Measurements List.

Safety precautions

The mobile center and medical team will follow CDC guidelines for COVID-19 precautions. Participants will be asked to follow all CDC safety recommendations. Staff will wear masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment as needed. The number of participants and staff at the mobile center will be limited to ensure proper social distancing. Special care will be taken to clean surfaces and equipment with CDC recommended disinfectants after each participant exam. Upon arrival at the mobile center you will be asked questions about your health on that day and over the past 2 weeks.



More questions?

Visit the NHANES participant website at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes/participant.htm>.

Our survey representatives can discuss other questions or concerns you might have or give you printed material that can help you. They can also give you a phone number in your area that you can call for more facts about the survey.

You can call our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Duong Nguyen of the U.S. Public Health Service, to discuss any aspect of the survey. He can be reached at 1-800-452-6115, Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. ET. You may contact him regarding any harm to you resulting from this survey. You can also get answers to your questions by writing to Dr. Nguyen at MS P08, 3311 Toledo Rd., Hyattsville, MD 20782-2064.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please call the Ethics Review Board at the National Center for Health Statistics, toll-free, at 1-800-223-8118. Please leave a brief message with your name and phone number, and say that you are calling about Protocol (#2020-xx) for NHANES 2021-2022. Your call will be returned as soon as possible.

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