



The health visit – a quick guide

www.natcen.ac.uk/elsa50plus

The health visit in brief



About the health visit

A biomedical fieldworker will ask you some further questions. They will also ask your permission to take some measurements, such as your blood pressure. All the measures are described in more detail in this booklet.

You do not have to have any measurements taken but, of course, we very much hope you will agree, as these are an important part of this study. For the results to make as much impact as possible, it's important that we learn about all types of people in different states of health.

As with all the information we collect we take great care to protect the confidentiality of all information and test results.

What is a biomedical fieldworker?

A biomedical fieldworker is a data collector with a background in Health and Social Care who is specially trained to take biological samples and measurements, including blood samples, in a survey setting. Biomedical fieldworkers may have previously worked in one of a range of Health and Social Care roles including doctors, nurses, midwives, phlebotomists, health care assistants, paramedics and other healthcare or health research related roles

Health visits will be carried out by NatCen and Inuvi biomedical fieldworkers. For this wave, NatCen have partnered with another organisation, INUVI, who have a panel of nurses who are experienced in conducting health visits. You can find out more about Inuvi at inuvi.co.uk/about.

Measurements



Blood pressure

The biomedical fieldworker would like to measure your blood pressure using an inflatable cuff that goes around your upper arm.

High blood pressure can be a health problem, but it is difficult to measure accurately. A person's blood pressure is influenced by age and can vary from day-to-day with emotion, meals, tobacco, alcohol, medication, temperature and pain. Although the biomedical fieldworker will tell you your blood pressure along with an indication of its meaning, a diagnosis cannot be made on a measurement taken on a single occasion.

Physical functioning

We would like to measure your upper body strength. Grip strength is an indicator of people's general health and it has also been shown to be linked to people's future health. The upper body strength measurement involves gripping a handle to assess your grip strength.

Lung Functioning

We would like to measure the amount of air you can breathe out of your lungs and how quickly you can get it out. This involves blowing into a tube. The amount of air you are able to breathe out depends partly on your height, your age, and how fit you are. Your result can only be interpreted in the light of these factors.



Height & weight

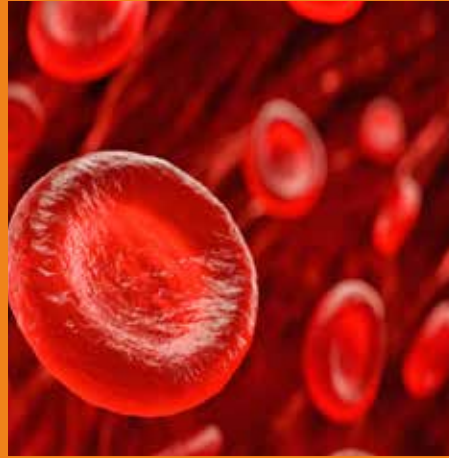
Both the height and the weight of the population appear to have been changing very rapidly over the last two decades. These changes reflect the changes in the population's diet and lifestyle. We are interested in the relationship between general build and health.

Hair sample

If you consent, we would like you to provide us with a small sample of your hair. The sample will be analysed for cortisol. Cortisol is related to levels of stress and is of particular interest because stress may be related to heart disease.

Balance

Measuring your ability to balance involves asking you to perform a few simple movements. This measurement can be an indicator of overall health and some studies show there is a link between balance and future health. The biomedical fieldworker will explain what we would like you to do when they visit. You will only do this if you feel safe and comfortable to do so.



Blood sample

We would be very grateful if you would agree to provide us with a sample of blood. This is an important part of the study, as the analysis of the blood samples will tell us a lot about the health of the population. You are of course free to choose not to give a blood sample.

Your biomedical fieldworker will ask for your written permission before a blood sample is taken.

A small amount of blood will be taken (no more than 22ml, about 4 teaspoons) from your arm.



The blood sample will be sent to a medical laboratory to test the following:

Total cholesterol | HDL cholesterol | Triglycerides

Cholesterol is a type of fat present in the blood, related to diet. Too much cholesterol in the blood increases the risk of heart disease. Triglycerides are another type of fat present in the blood related to diet.

Fibrinogen

Fibrinogen is a protein necessary for blood clotting and high levels are also associated with a higher risk of heart disease.

Ferritin | Glycated haemoglobin and haemoglobin | White cell count

Ferritin and haemoglobin are measures of iron levels in the body and are related to diet and other factors, together with white cell count they can indicate anaemia.

Vitamin D

We obtain vitamin D from the diet and also from sunshine, where the ultraviolet light converts vitamin D into an active form in the skin. We need vitamin D for healthy bones. The only way we know if someone has enough vitamin D for the body's needs is to measure it in the blood

Insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1)

IGF-1 is a hormone that helps control reactions to stress and regulate various body processes including digestion, the immune system, mood, and energy usage.

Fasting blood samples

The biomedical fieldworker may, in some cases, ask you if you are willing to give your blood sample before you have had anything to eat. Blood samples collected from you when you have "fasted" can be tested for triglycerides and glucose.

Glucose levels found in "fasting" blood provides information on how well your body handles sugar and are associated with risk of diabetes.

Blood samples will not be tested for the HIV (AIDS) virus.

Storing samples

We will ask for consent for any remaining blood to be stored for future analysis and used in the future for medical research studies of common diseases and the ageing process.

All of the blood test results, and related information, will be coded so that you cannot be identified and access to your name and address will be restricted to the ELSA research team through the use of a unique identification number.

For purposes of scientific analyses, links to your name will be held separately and securely from any data collected. Only research approved by the study team and an independent NHS Research Ethics Committee will be allowed, now and in the future, and the sample will not be tested for HIV.

You can withdraw this consent at any time by contacting the investigators in writing, without giving any reasons and at no penalty.

Results from your blood sample

We can send you the results of your blood tests following the health visit. You will receive results for the following tests:

Total cholesterol
HDL cholesterol

LDL cholesterol
Triglycerides
Ferritin
Fasting glucose
Haemoglobin
Glycated haemoglobin
Vitamin D

Letting your GP know the results



With your agreement, we would like to send some of your results to your GP, if applicable, such as your blood pressure, blood sample and lung function results. Your GP can interpret the results in the light of your medical history which could help improve your health.

If the GP considers your results to be satisfactory, then nothing further will be done. If your results showed, for example, that your blood pressure was above average for someone of your sex and age, your GP may wish to measure it again. Often it is possible to reduce blood pressure by treatment or by changing your diet. It is for you and your GP to decide if any action is needed.

The biomedical fieldworker will ask for your written permission to pass your results on to your GP.



Are there any implications for insurance cover?

If you agree to your results being sent to your GP, then they can use them in medical reports about you. This may occur if you apply for a new life assurance policy, or for a new job. Insurance companies may ask those who apply for new policies if they have had any medical tests. If so, the insurance company may ask if they can obtain a medical report from the GP.

Because of the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 an insurance company cannot ask your GP for a medical report on you without

your permission. Having given your permission, you then have the right to see the report before your GP sends it to the insurance company and you can ask for the report to be amended if you consider it to be incorrect or misleading.

The purpose of a medical report is for the company to judge whether to charge normal premiums, whether to charge higher premiums or whether, in exceptional circumstances, to turn down life insurance on account of the person's health.

For more information

We hope this leaflet answers the questions you may have, and that it shows the importance of the study. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Your co-operation is very much appreciated.

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**Thank you very much for your help
with this important study.**