

Participating in Research



Research finds new and improved treatments and cures for diseases. Research cannot be done without volunteers. Volunteering for research is an important personal decision. Some people enjoy furthering medical research; others want the newest treatments and close medical check-ups. Many clinical trials pay volunteers for their time.

Types of Clinical Trials (Research)

A Clinical trial is the study of how people respond to new medicines, treatments or tests. There are different types of clinical trials.

- **Treatment** trials test new treatments or medicines.
- **Prevention** trials look for ways to prevent diseases.
- **Diagnostic** trials look for better ways to diagnose a disease.
- **Screening** trials find new ways to detect certain diseases.
- **Quality of Life** trials look at ways to improve comfort or quality of life for people with chronic diseases.

Phases of Clinical Trials:

New treatments and medicines must go through several trials before being released for public use. A research team that may include doctors, nurses, social workers or others run each trial. The team checks the volunteers closely before and during the trial to see how well the treatment works. The team also watches for any bad side effects of the treatment.

Protocols for Clinical Trials



Clinical trials have protocols (instructions) to follow. Protocols specify who can be in the trial. This helps the researchers compare “apples to apples” by studying similar people or diseases. Protocols also list treatments; tests and check-ups to be done; and how long the study will last. Some protocols split volunteers into 2 groups. One of the groups will get the treatment and the other group will get an inactive treatment (placebo).

Is it Safe to be a Volunteer?

There is always some risk. However, every clinical trial in the U.S. must be approved and monitored by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is made up of a group of doctors, community advocates and others not connected with the clinical trial. The IRB make sure the risks of the clinical trial are as low as possible and that the ethical and legal rights of the volunteers are protected. IRB monitors the progress of the clinical trial and will stop the trial if there are problems. The research team will also stop the trial or remove someone from a trial if their condition gets worse or they have serious side effects to the treatment. Volunteers can drop out anytime.

I Want to Volunteer!

- Let your health care provider know you are interested in volunteering.
- Several trials are usually going on at the same time and if you do not qualify for one trial you may be selected for a similar one.
- Try to match the trial with the time you have available.
- Choose a trial you think will be most helpful to you.
- Talk to people performing the research so you fully understand the trial and what will be expected of you.
- Read the consent form carefully and understand the risks and benefits before signing up.
- Continue to see your regular care providers while you are in the trial.
- For more information on clinical trials visit the NIH (National Institute of Health) website at <http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct/info/whatis>.