There are many different types of online DNA tests

Ordering a test online

When you order a DNA test online, you will first need to select a test that interests you. The testing companies will send kits for you to collect oral or skin samples, and the company will then analyze your DNA from the kits in the laboratory.

Some will look at more than 50,000 individual loci throughout the DNA. There might be thousands linked with a specific condition or characteristic, but we do not know for certain.

Making sense of your DNA data

Your results are compared with other people’s DNA and information that is held in databases.

Your DNA results rely on population statistics and quality control. Your results depend on the technology, software and processing company used to make sense of your DNA data.

What can these DNA tests tell you?

DNA tests that you can order online generally won’t diagnose a disease.

Online DNA tests can usually only provide general information or the closure of your family or of knowing who you are.

Your results may also affect your family, because you share DNA with your family members.

It can be hard to work out how accurate an online DNA test is. Telling with a health professional and confirming results before you take action can be important, particularly in the case of health-related online DNA tests.

DNA reports and support

Your DNA results can be provided in several different ways, such as:

A short report for health or lifestyle

A description of your DNA data, which is a basic DNA test report, which is the most common.

A detailed report for informed consent or participation

Your unrestricted (open) data, which is a basic DNA test report, which is the most common.

Other uses for DNA data

Depending on what you agree to in the terms and conditions, your data may also be used to research, for example, cancer or other diseases. It is important to understand who can access your data and for what purposes.

If you download or re-use your own DNA data (or that of others), you can use that data, to get results beyond the purpose of the original test.