

ONLINE DNA TESTS

There are many different types of online DNA tests



Ordering a test online



When you order a DNA test online, many testing companies will send a kit for you to collect a spit sample or cheek swab. The company will extract your DNA from the cells in the sample.

How are the DNA tests different?

DNA is made up of a sequence of four chemicals, usually known by letters **A**, **C**, **T**, and **G**. There are billions of these chemical letters in the cells of your body.

Most online DNA tests compare many specific individual letters along the DNA at the same time.



Some will look at more than 500,000 individual locations along the DNA. These might be loosely linked with a specific condition or characteristic, not its direct cause.

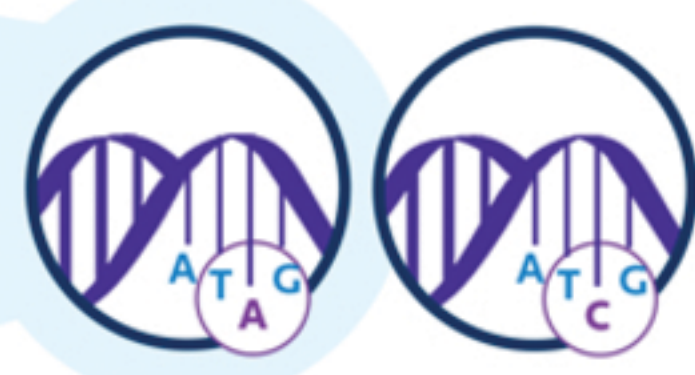


Other tests read the order or sequence of letters of much larger sections, such as genes, or large sections of your DNA. Some tests might sequence all of your DNA but still only tell you about parts of it.

Making sense of your DNA data

Reading your DNA information is only the first part of the test

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



A computer program or person analyses the differences between your DNA and others' DNA



Your DNA results rely on population statistics and computer analyses. Your results depend on the technology, evidence and processes the company uses to make sense of your DNA data.



There are big gaps in our scientific knowledge, so the biggest challenge in DNA testing is in working out the meaning of a specific change or difference in a DNA letter.



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 relationship information or the chance of you having or developing a condition or characteristic.

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. Talking 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 to you in different ways, such as:



A risk report for health or disease



A likelihood to develop or inherit a characteristic



A description of your ethnicity or relatedness to others (ancestry)



Your unprocessed (raw) data, which is a file of DNA letters or sections that require further analysis.

Some companies require a referral from a health professional. Others offer telephone or online genetic counselling or other forms of information. Most provide a test kit and report without additional support.



Other uses for DNA data



Depending on what you agree to in the terms and conditions, your data may also be used, shared or sold by the testing company



If you download your unprocessed or raw DNA data (a list of the letters), you can use online tools to get results beyond the purpose of the original test.