Hi Reddit! We’re representatives from personal genetics companies and the DNA Discussion Project and are here to talk about at-home genetic testing and what it means for you. Ask us anything!

This Wednesday, April 25, we celebrate National DNA Day – a day which commemorates the completion of the Human Genome Project! Flash forward 15 years later, we’re now at a time when taking a detailed look at your genome is as easy as ordering a kit online, spitting in a tube or swabbing the inside of your cheek, and sending it off through the mail to a lab. Personal genetics companies (such as some of the ones listed below), are using these at-home genetic testing kits to help people access and understand their own genetic make-up. The market for at-home genetic testing is ever-growing and can offer different aspects about what makes you, you! For example, these kits can inform people about their ancestral origins, may help you learn about your genetic health risk for certain diseases, or even tell you if you have a preference for salty or sweet foods!

As part of the ‘15 for 15’ Celebration, which celebrates National DNA Day’s 15th birthday, the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) is unveiling 15 ways that genomics has and will continue to transform our world – including at-home genetic testing. We have gathered representatives from personal genetics companies (though NHGRI does not endorse these companies’ products by organizing this AMA), the DNA Discussion Project at West Chester University, and our policy experts here at NHGRI to answer your questions.

Here’s a bit about those of us answering your questions today, we'll be back at 1 pm ET to answer your questions, Ask us anything!

23andMe: Dave Hinds, Ph.D., Research Fellow, Statistical Genetics; Hilary Vance, Associate Project Manager, Ancestry; Geoff Benton, Ph.D., Director of Health R&D; Shirley Wu, Ph.D., Director of Product Science; Greg Sargent, B.S., Data Protection Associate. 23andMe, Inc. is a consumer genetics and research company. Founded in 2006, our mission is to help people access, understand and benefit from the human genome. 23andMe has over five million customers worldwide, with more than 80 percent of customers consented to participate in research and over one billion phenotypic data points collected to date. Our cohort is the largest re-contactable research database of genotypic and phenotypic information in the world, and our research participants have contributed to nearly 100 publications.

AncestryDNA: D. Barry Starr, Ph.D., Director of Scientific Communications. Ancestry, the global leader in family history and consumer genomics, harnesses the information found in family trees, historical records and DNA to help people make discoveries about where they come from, who they’re related to, and what makes them unique.

DNA Discussion Project at West Chester University: Anita Foeman, Ph.D. and Bessie Lawton, Ph.D. Our work over more than a decade has looked at the potential for ancestry DNA to challenge traditional views of race. We explore new narratives that help explain and honor the past, address the complexity of race, and create more positive wellness outcomes. Project directors facilitate programs with students, businesses and community groups.

FamilyTreeDNA: Connie Bormans, Ph.D., Laboratory Director. Founded in 2000, FamilyTreeDNA is the world leader in genetic genealogy and ancestry DNA testing and has the most comprehensive ancestry DNA combined database. Through a simple cheek swab that’s processed in its state-of-the-art Genomics Research Center in Houston, customers can discover fascinating information about their ancestral origins, trace geographical connections, confirm relationships, and search for relatives. The company offers a variety of test options, including mtDNA and Y-DNA tests, that can be purchased online at www.familytreedna.com.

Helix: Sharon Briggs Ph.D., Senior Scientist in Applied Genomics; Elissa Levin, M.S., Director of Policy and Clinical Affairs. Helix’s mission to is empower every person to improve their life through DNA.
National Geographic Society’s The National Genographic Project: Miguel Vilar, Ph.D., Lead Scientist for the National Genographic Project and Senior Program Officer at National Geographic Society. The National Geographic’s Genographic Project is a global citizen science initiative that aims to better understand human history, human migration, and human evolution. The thirteen-year-old project has enrolled and collaborated with more than fifty geneticists and anthropologists from across the world, and nearly one million participants have joined the global project. We use the power of DNA to better understand our ancestry, how we are all closely related, and how we came to populate the world in the last 100,000 years.

NHGRI’s Division of Policy, Communications, and Education: Laura Lyman Rodriguez, Ph.D., Director; Cristina Kapustij, M.S., Chief, Policy and Program Analysis Branch (PPAB); Sonya Jooma, M.A., Health Policy Analyst, PPAB; Rebecca Hong, B.S., Scientific Program Analyst, PPAB. Our mission is to promote the use of genomic knowledge to advance human health and society. We achieve this mission by engaging broad communities of stakeholders in NHGRI’s activities and promoting dialog and awareness of the potential implications of the application of this knowledge within society.

The AMA is still in progress

Hi Reddit! We’re representatives from personal genetics companies and the DNA Discussion Project and are here to talk about at-home genetic testing and what it means for you. Ask us anything!

To publish your own ideas and research, sign up here! We bring traditional scholarly publishing tools (DOI & permanent archival) to blogs, essays, grants, protocols, how-to’s, essays, and other media, including reddit AMAs, because scholarly communication doesn’t just happen in scholarly journals.

Support archival of this AMA