



What You Need to Know about Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing

What is direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing?

DTC refers to a genetic test you can complete at home without a health care provider. You collect a DNA sample and send it to the company. They analyze it and give you a report on your genetics

What information can I get from a DTC genetic test?

There are many different types of DTC tests available. Some tell you about ancestry, kinship, lifestyle factors and disease risk. Companies can analyze your DNA and give information about these things.

What do DTC companies do with my data?

That depends on the fine print! You should read up on each company's policies. They vary on how they decide to store your sample and your data, and with whom they may share your data.

What else should I consider before buying a test?

Before you buy a test, consider if there is any information you would rather not know. In some cases, you can decline to find out specific information if you tell the company beforehand. Since you share your DNA with your relatives, a test may reveal information that affects you and the rest of your family.

For ancestry tests, genetics are only part of the story. There are also many social and cultural factors that make up your identity. For health tests, a DTC genetic test cannot give you as much information as a genetic test ordered by a doctor.

Finally, not all tests are regulated by FDA, the government agency that regulates medicines and other medical products.

Which test should I get?

It is up to you to research the companies and decide which test best fits your needs. You may also find it helpful to consult a genetics specialist (for example, a genetic counselor or geneticist) or the NIH's Genetics Home Reference (see website linked below) for advice.

Does NHGRI offer DTC testing?

No, NHGRI does not offer DTC genetic tests. DTC genetic tests are sold by private companies.

