



## About DNA

DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) is the genetic material present in every cell of the body. For example, it is in blood, saliva, skin and hair. Everyone has DNA. A person inherits their DNA makeup from their parents. Therefore, blood relatives share similar DNA.

## DNA testing

DNA testing compares genetic material from 2 or more people to determine if they are biologically related. The genetic material for testing is usually taken from a mouth swab or blood sample.

## Why DNA testing is suggested for some applicants

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection (the department) endorses DNA testing as one means of providing evidence of a claimed biological family relationship. Usually other forms of evidence such as birth certificates or family books are available. However, DNA testing is a useful option when documentary evidence of a claimed biological relationship is unreliable or is unavailable.

The department may suggest that you undertake DNA testing as a means to prove a claimed biological relationship when the department is not satisfied with available evidence of a claimed relationship.

You may be required to provide evidence of a family relationship to meet the criteria for the grant of a visa or Australian citizenship by descent. DNA test results provide evidence of claimed family relationships, for example parent-child relationship or brothers and sisters.

## DNA testing is not mandatory

You do not have to undertake DNA testing when its use is suggested.

DNA testing is not required by law. It is another form of evidence; usually an alternative to a birth certificate. If you decide to undertake DNA testing, the department provides information on how to arrange a test that will meet the department's requirements. Any test obtained outside these requirements may not be accepted.

If you decide not to undertake DNA testing, a decision on your visa or citizenship by descent application will be made on the information available to the department at that time.

## Costs for DNA testing

Applicants for migrant visas or Australian citizenship by descent must pay the full costs for DNA testing.

The department pays the full costs of DNA testing for refugee visa applicants. However, Special Humanitarian Program applicants who are offered DNA testing must pay the full costs of DNA testing.

## Counselling

You can seek counselling (advice) from a health professional or Panel doctor before you decide to do DNA testing. You can also seek counselling after the DNA test results are known.

**Note:** You will be responsible for paying for any counselling you undertake.

## What the DNA test results show

DNA testing of a parent and a child shows the biological link between them.

In most cases DNA testing confirms the claimed relationship.

Sometimes the DNA test does not give a clear result of a relationship for other family members. If a result is not clear, the laboratory will explain the results.

## What the DNA test results are used for

The DNA test results disclosed to the department will be used strictly for immigration purposes only.

## Privacy and confidentiality issues

Your personal information is protected by law, including the *Privacy Act 1988*. Important information about the collection, use and disclosure (to other agencies and third parties, including overseas entities) of your personal information, including sensitive information, is contained in form 1442i *Privacy notice*. Form 1442i is available from the department's website [www.border.gov.au/allforms/](http://www.border.gov.au/allforms/) or offices of the department.

DNA testing laboratories must obtain your written consent before they can disclose your DNA test results to the department or to a sponsor.

You can get more information about privacy and confidentiality of your DNA testing results from the laboratory undertaking your DNA testing.

## DNA testing laboratories

If the department suggests you undertake DNA testing, you must choose a DNA testing laboratory that has been accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA) for family law testing and, additionally for clients to be tested outside Australia, that can meet the department's requirements for DNA testing in an international context.

**Note:** You will also need to choose a DNA sample collector.

See step 3 below on how you can select a DNA testing laboratory and step 5 below on how to select a DNA sample collector.

## The process for DNA testing

The process for DNA testing involves the following steps:

1. The department sends you a letter suggesting you undertake DNA testing. The letter will give you information about DNA testing, the DNA testing process and how to select a DNA testing laboratory and a DNA sample collector.
2. You decide if you want to proceed with DNA testing. You can seek counselling from a health professional or panel doctor if you wish, but this will be at your own expense.

If you decide **not** to proceed with DNA testing, the department will decide your visa or citizenship by descent application based on the information available at that time.

3. If you decide to proceed with DNA testing, you must choose a DNA testing laboratory that has been accredited by NATA for family law testing and, additionally for clients to be tested outside Australia, that can meet the department's requirements for DNA testing in an international context. To find a laboratory:

- go to the NATA website at [www.nata.asn.au](http://www.nata.asn.au)
- select the 'Facilities and Labs' tab at the top of the webpage, then select 'Forensic Science', then 'Parentage testing'. This will give you a list of accredited laboratories from which you can choose; and
- contact your chosen laboratory to make sure that the laboratory is capable of complying with the department's requirements (a statutory declaration template that sets out these requirements is included in the DNA testing offer letter).

4. When you have chosen a DNA testing laboratory, you need to contact that laboratory to make an appointment and arrange with the laboratory to pay the costs of the DNA testing.

In addition, you will need to check with the laboratory if they require you to send the statutory declaration template to them so that they can complete and sign and forward it to the relevant visa processing office.

**Note:** If you are being tested outside Australia, you may not need to send the template to the laboratory to be completed and signed if the department has in place arrangements relating to the statutory declaration templates from that particular laboratory.

5. You will also need to choose a DNA sample collector and provide contact details to the DNA testing laboratory so that they can make arrangements for sample collection. To choose a DNA sample collector:

- if you are outside Australia — the relevant overseas processing office should have already provided you with a list of approved local sample collectors in the DNA testing offer letter from which you can choose; or
- if you are in Australia — you will need to nominate a pathology collection centre (or, in rare instances where there is no pathology collection centre nearby, a general practitioner) in Australia that can satisfy the department's requirements relating to DNA sampling for family law purposes.

6. If not already done, the laboratory will then send a sample testing kit and, if required, the completed and signed statutory declaration directly to:

- if you are outside Australia – the visa or citizenship application processing office. (Depending on local requirements, however, there may be instances when the sample kit and signed statutory declaration are sent directly to your nominated DNA sample collector.); or
- if you are in Australia – your nominated DNA sample collector.

7. The DNA testing laboratory will then contact you to arrange to collect samples from you and others being DNA tested. Samples are usually taken from a mouth swab or blood spot.

A representative of the department **must** be present when samples are taken from all donors outside Australia. Occasionally, sample taking from donors in Australia will also need to be witnessed.

DNA tests that do not meet the department's requirements may not be accepted. (DNA test results that are recognised legally in Australia may be acceptable.)

8. At time of DNA sample collection, you will need to complete and sign the client consent pro forma (*DNA Laboratory to Disclose DNA Results to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection*) that the department sent in the DNA testing offer letter (which you will also have to take to show the DNA sample collector). The client consent pro forma is to obtain your consent for the disclosure of your DNA test results to the department. Each person undergoing a sample collection must fill in the pro forma at time of sample collection and give it to:

- if you are outside Australia – the department's witness, who will send the completed pro forma, along with the samples, to the relevant DNA testing laboratory (note, in rare cases, it will be the sample collector who will do this); or
- if you are in Australia, and there is no departmental witness – the DNA sample collector who will send the completed pro forma, along with the samples, to the relevant DNA testing laboratory.

The DNA test results will be sent to you as well as to the department, and are usually available 14 days from the date the DNA testing laboratory receives all samples.

9. If the DNA test results show unexpected biological links (for example, parentage test rules out a 'parent' donor), you may wish to undertake counselling. A panel doctor who has been appointed by the Australian Government will be able to provide such counselling, but you will need to pay for this service.

**Note:** If you require such services and you have not already been advised of how to contact a panel doctor, you can obtain details from the relevant visa or citizenship application processing office of the department.

## Read this information in other languages

This information is also available in the following languages:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Dari
- French
- Mandarin
- Somali
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese

## Need more information about DNA testing

If you or your relative have been asked to undertake DNA testing and you have further questions, or need more information about DNA testing, please contact the office of the department that suggested the test or visit the department's website [www.border.gov.au](http://www.border.gov.au)

*Home page*

[www.border.gov.au](http://www.border.gov.au)

*General enquiry line*

Telephone **131 881** during business hours in Australia to speak to an operator (recorded information available outside these hours). If you are outside Australia, please contact your nearest Australian mission.