



APPRISE

AUSTRALIAN PARTNERSHIP FOR
PREPAREDNESS RESEARCH ON
INFECTIOUS DISEASE EMERGENCIES

Frequently Asked Questions – ‘First Few X’ (FFX) project to enhance the public health response to COVID-19 in Australia

General FFX Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

For common questions on COVID-19 please see the [Australian Government's Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic page](#).

What does FFX stand for?

This activity is known as the ‘First few X’ (FFX) project, where ‘X’ represents the first identified cases of a disease. The project is coordinated through the Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious disease Emergencies (APPRISE). The Australian FFX project is based on a World Health Organization protocol and is one of many similar studies being conducted worldwide.

What is this project about?

The overall aim of the ‘First Few X’ project is to gain an understanding of the infectiousness and severity of the cases of COVID-19 in Australia. This information helps to support international understanding of this disease. The project will also provide information about the impact of vaccines, different COVID-19 variants and long term COVID-19 immunity.

What will the information collected in this project be used for?

Within Australia, it will be used by the Australian Government and state and territory governments to inform the public health response to this virus and new variants. This may include supporting preparedness planning in hospitals and other parts of the health service to ensure that needed care is available for patients throughout outbreaks. It may also help to inform vaccination strategies as the pandemic evolves.

Why does my child need to participate?

It is important that your household is enrolled and studied as one unit to help understand how COVID-19 is spreading within households and to provide the essential information needed to help make better public health decisions in Australia. The inclusion of children in the project will ensure that we understand more about their role in disease transmission.

How will I find out about the results of this project?

Results from the project will be compiled into reports that will be sent to the Australian Government and the Victorian Department of Health.

Results from research studies will be published in peer-reviewed journals and in conference presentations. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified.

The project team will arrange periodic forums for overall results to be shared with interested participants.

Will further research be undertaken using my samples?

Any further use of your samples or information will need your written consent. Information and samples collected as part of the FFX project have the potential to be used to help understand more about COVID-19. Collection of additional samples from FFX participants could inform future aspects of the public health response to this disease.



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Who is funding this project?

The FFX project is being supported by the Australian Government Department of Health and the National Health and Medical Research Council, through the APPRISE Centre of Research Excellence.

Testing

How will I be tested?

Tests for COVID-19 will be conducted by accredited public health laboratories using their standard COVID-19 tests. The method of sample collection for these tests will depend on where you live in Australia.

You may be sent a kit with a swab and instructions on how to collect your own sample. We will also provide instructions on how to collect a sample from a child or from someone who may not be able to do it themselves. This kit will be picked up from your home, so you won't have to leave your house to post it.

You may have your sample collected by a trained healthcare worker who will visit your home to take your swab.

Rapid antigen tests are now also available and may be recommended to you in line with public health guidance and accessibility.

Please see below for further information about self-swabbing.

All blood samples will be collected by trained personnel.

How often will I be tested?

You will be tested up to four times in the initial 4 weeks of the project – once a week for three weeks, and then another after a fortnight, if required. The first time will be just after your enrolment (baseline – blood and swab), then one week later (day 7 – swab), then another week later (day 14 – swab) and a final test two weeks after that (day 28 – blood and swab). Further blood samples may be collected periodically for up to 1 year post enrolment.

What happens after I am tested?

After each of your sample collections are complete, public health laboratories will test your swab for the presence of COVID-19. The results will be sent to your state's health department who will contact you with your result. Blood samples will be analysed for COVID-19 specific immune responses.

What if my test is positive for COVID-19?

Your state's health department will contact you if your test returns a positive result and will advise you of isolation requirements and the next steps you will need to take. Most people who test positive for COVID-19 can stay at home to recover. The advice for managing your condition will be based on your symptoms, clinical judgement and advice from your state health department.

What if my test is negative for COVID-19?

If your test is negative, you will still need to remain at home for the rest of your relevant isolation period in line with public health guidelines. You will still need to be tested again at the additional project timepoints.



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Self-swabbing

What is self-swabbing?

Self-swabbing is when you collect a sample for COVID-19 testing yourself instead of having the sample collected by a trained healthcare professional. We will provide step-by-step instructions and link to a video demonstrating the correct way to do this at home. The use of rapid antigen tests is described and enclosed in the package.

Why do I have to do the swab myself?

Self-swabbing will enable swab samples to be collected for the FFX project without putting further pressure on limited resources.

Self-swabbing will also help to reduce contact with members of the public and help you to remain self-isolated.

Self-swabbing is a valid method of testing for viruses, including COVID-19.

Where do I put the swab?

This is a combined throat and nose swab. You will receive clear written instructions that will explain exactly how to use the swab and collect your sample for testing.

See these videos for further instruction:

- [How to swab your own nose and throat](#)
- [How to swab the nose and throat of others](#)

What if I don't do the swab correctly?

It's very important that you follow the instructions as closely as possible. We want to make sure that your sample is good quality so that we can provide accurate results.

If the swab does not collect enough virus (either because it is not done well or there is a low level of virus present), the test may return a negative result. A negative result does not necessarily exclude infection with COVID-19 and you are still required to complete your relevant isolation period in line with public health guidelines. You will still need to collect samples at the other project timepoints. We advise you to contact your local COVID-19 information line or GP for advice if you develop symptoms at any time.

Is the swab procedure painful? Will I hurt myself?

The self-swabbing procedure may cause some mild discomfort but should not be painful. Care should be taken to follow the instructions for swabbing to ensure that it is done correctly.

What effects might I see from the swabbing?

The swab procedure may cause you to sneeze and your eyes to water. Aside from this mild discomfort and a tickling feeling, you may experience a small amount of bleeding from your nose. This is due to the delicate nature of the lining of your nose and is not a cause for concern. It should stop on its own in a short time.



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Data

What information about me will be used?

The results of your swab test will be provided to the state or territory health department and will be communicated to you by phone.

A de-identified summary of your test results and interviews will be provided to the Australian Government Department of Health and the University of Melbourne for the purposes of data analysis. The de-identified summary information will include the following information:

- Age
- Sex
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status
- Your possible exposure to COVID-19
- Symptoms of illness
- Whether or not you have any pre-existing health conditions
- Your current health status at the time of each interview
- Vaccination status
- History of COVID-19 infection
- The date the swab was collected and its result.

These data will not include your name or address and therefore can't be used to identify you.

Who will use my information?

Only sites that collected your information and researchers who have been funded to work on this project will be able to access and use your data. If you provide additional consent for researchers to further use your data, researchers will only be able to use your information in a deidentified format for FFX project purposes. This means researchers will not know who you are.

Will my information be secure?

Your information will remain protected from disclosure to unauthorised persons. The University of Melbourne will employ national and international good practice, policies and procedures in the data warehouse in line with national legislation around privacy and data security.

What if I want to stop participating in this project?

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to.

If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. The information collected before you withdraw from the project will be used.

Your decision on whether to take part or not, or to take part and then withdraw, will not impact on your relationship with those treating you or your relationship with your state or territory department of health.



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If you want to stop participating in this project, please contact your site coordinator who is listed on the FFX patient information sheet you were given when you agreed to participate in this project. If you are unsure who this person is please contact Laura Bannerman on 03 9035 7940 or email ffx-info@unimelb.edu.au.

Where can I get more information about the project?

Please visit our [APPRISE FFX webpage](#).

If you are participating in the project being led by the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, please visit [this page](#) for additional information.

If you are not participating in the project and would like to know more please contact us at ffx-info@unimelb.edu.au