



DNA Testing

Information for applicants

WHAT IS DNA?

Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is the body's genetic code that determines our individual characteristics. DNA is found in almost all of the billions of cells that make up the human body. DNA testing is a scientific process that can identify biological relationships between people from their DNA. By using several genetic tests, a DNA profile is created that can be compared with that of others to determine if individuals are related.

When can INZ use DNA evidence?

When documentary and other evidence of a relationship does not exist or is unreliable, DNA testing may be the only way to prove a biological relationship. In these circumstances, Immigration New Zealand (INZ) may raise the possibility of each person in that relationship submitting a sample of DNA for testing.

Applicants can also provide INZ with DNA test results to supplement their application at any time. However, only DNA tests carried out by an INZ-approved testing laboratory and samples taken by an INZ-approved medical facility in accordance with standard procedures will be accepted as evidence.

Who takes the sample and how is it taken?

INZ has a list of medical facilities worldwide that we have approved as DNA samplers. Each person who wants to be tested will need to organise an appointment with one of these samplers to take a sample of their DNA. All selected samplers are trained specialists and, apart from physically taking the sample, their role will be to answer your questions about DNA testing before you give the sample.

The actual taking of the DNA sample is a simple procedure, involving taking a mouth swab. Each sample will be allocated a unique sample identifier number and is tracked by a bar code system.

How are the samples tested?

The samplers send the DNA samples to the INZ-approved DNA testing laboratory. Testing is controlled by a stringent quality system to ensure it is carried out correctly. The quality control procedure involves the checking and double-checking of samples and the results at every critical stage of the process. The accredited testing laboratory complies with international standards.

What happens if the test shows we are unlikely to be related?

We recognise that different cultures have different concepts of the family unit. In a small number of cases, DNA testing of family members can identify that individuals who believed they were related are, in fact, not related. Others may find they are related in a different way to that in which they believed they were related. These kinds of DNA results can be unexpected and, whilst INZ will handle this information sensitively, you should carefully consider the implications of testing before agreeing to proceed.

Please remember that it is your choice whether or not to participate in DNA testing. If you do not wish to participate, we will assess your application on the other evidence available. Refusal to take the test will not by itself negatively impact on the decision to approve or decline an application. We advise that both people in the relationship under scrutiny discuss the available options thoroughly.

Who pays for the tests?

While the applicant is generally expected to pay for DNA testing to verify a relationship, there are some exceptions. If the relationship to be tested involves a sponsor and an applicant, and the sponsor has obtained residence in New Zealand under the Refugee Family Support Category, the costs will be met by INZ. Additionally, on a case-by-case basis, INZ may pay for the testing in situations where an applicant cannot afford the cost.

If INZ has sent you this leaflet, the accompanying letter will tell you whether you need to pay for the test and, if so, the cost. INZ collects this money on behalf of the samplers and the testing laboratory. If you decide to submit a DNA sample for testing at your own cost, please enclose the stated fee with the signed declaration. The fee should be in the form of a bank draft payable in the currency advised in the letter.

How will I get my test results?

The testing laboratory will send the test results to the INZ branch dealing with the application via first class post. The results will be worded as a "likelihood of the relationship". The DNA testing laboratory and INZ will not give out or discuss the results of the test over the telephone. Each person who has been tested can ask INZ in writing for a copy of the results.

DNA samples will only be used by INZ to test biological relationships for immigration purposes. All materials associated with the test (ie samples and paperwork) will be destroyed after the following periods.

- Paperwork at the sampling clinics – three months
- Samples at the DNA testing laboratory – 24 months
- Paperwork at the DNA testing laboratory – 24 months
- Computer records at the DNA laboratory – 24 months.

I understand the implications of DNA testing and want to be tested. What next?

If you have read and understood the information in this leaflet, and wish to give a sample of your DNA for testing, sign the declaration contained in the accompanying letter. A parent or legal guardian should sign on behalf of any person under the age of 16 that wishes to be tested. Make sure you send it back to us by the date specified on the accompanying letter.

When INZ receives your signed declaration and fee (if you are to pay), we will advise the testing laboratory and the sampler of the names of the people who intend to submit a DNA sample for testing and the claimed relationship. At the same time, we will advise you which medical facility you need to make an appointment with to provide a sample of your DNA.

If we do not receive the form and payment by the date specified, we will assume you do not wish to take up the offer of DNA testing and your name will be added to the list for the next round of interviews in your area.

How are donors identified at their appointment?

Each person being tested (including children) must bring two recent passport-sized photographs of themselves as well as their passport, certificate of identity, New Zealand-issued refugee travel document, or New Zealand-issued driver's licence to the sampling appointment.

At the appointment, identification paperwork is completed and signed by each individual giving a sample. The sampler signs a declaration that the sample has been taken from the person in the photograph.

The identification paperwork is sent with the sample to the DNA testing laboratory where it will be held for a limited period. One photograph and the original copy of the paperwork will be sent to INZ along with the test results.