

Information about the Health 2011 survey

Dear Health 2011 participant,

Your participation in the survey is voluntary but very important.

You were randomly selected to take part in the Health 2000 survey on the basis of data contained in the Finnish Population Information System in 2000. We would now, 11 years on, like to invite you to take part in a follow-up survey called Health 2011. Almost 10,000 individuals will be invited to take part in the survey. Participation in the survey is voluntary. All personal information will be kept confidential, and only researchers involved in conducting the survey will be able to access the data.

The Health 2011 survey has been designed by a team of our country's most senior experts who previously oversaw the Health 2000 survey. The experts represent the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Finnish Centre for Pensions, and various universities. The survey is coordinated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare, and the leading researcher is Professor Seppo Koskinen. The field study will be conducted across the country from August 2011 onwards, and it will conclude at the beginning of 2012.

We would like to take this opportunity to appeal once more for your help in order for the survey to be successful. The individuals selected for the survey represent the population of Finland, which is why information about each participant is important. From the perspective of the follow-up aspect of the survey, it is important that we are able to compile comparison data for the information collected in the Health 2000 survey. We wish that you will take part in the survey even if you have recently participated in some other survey or had a check-up.

Employer organisations recommend that employers provide an opportunity for their employees to participate in the survey. You can present the enclosed letter to your employer, if you believe that it can have a positive impact on your ability to take part in the survey. You will also be able to obtain a certificate of attendance at the examination site, if necessary.

Before your appointment

Please fill in the enclosed questionnaire as carefully as possible according to the instructions provided. If you find any of the questions difficult to answer, you can leave them blank and discuss them with the nurses at the examination site. Please also familiarise yourself with the enclosed consent form and bring the form and the completed questionnaire with you to the appointment. At your appointment, you will be asked to sign the form to give your consent to your information being included in the survey.

In order for your cholesterol measurements to be reliable, please avoid fatty foods (butter, fatty meat, milk, etc.) on the day of your appointment and **abstain from eating and drinking for 4 hours before the appointment**. Please wear clothes that allow you to easily expose your right arm for your blood pressure to be measured.

Format and time required for the survey

Your check-up will be carried out by experienced and professional nurses and dentists who specialise in the fields involved.

You will be invited to a check-up where a nurse will test your vision and measure your blood pressure, height, weight and take your body circumference measurements. Your body composition (e.g. percentage of body fat) and lung function will also be measured. An electrocardiogram (ECG) and blood samples will be taken to determine your blood serum cholesterol and HDL cholesterol as well as your blood sugar or glucose levels. The results of these tests will be sent to you from the laboratory of the National Institute for Health and Welfare afterwards.

After the initial measurements, a dentist will carry out a detailed oral health inspection. You will be served a snack, after which your ability to do everyday tasks will be examined by testing your balance, your walking speed, your ability to rise from a chair, your hand grip strength, and the functioning of your joints. We will also carry out simple tests on your memory. This will be followed by a brief interview concerning your psychological well-being. After the tests are performed, the nurse will discuss your results with you. Some participants will be invited to further tests that focus on physical fitness and exercise.

All of the tests are relatively simple, and we have found that tested individuals generally find the results very interesting. Please reserve a total of 4 hours for the check-up. All of the tests, including sample-taking, are safe, and the results will give interesting and useful information for you as well.

Data contained in public registers

Your results will be combined with data contained in various registers such as those held by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (e.g. hospital discharge and cancer records), the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (e.g. sickness insurance and pension records), Statistics Finland, the Finnish Centre for Pensions, the Finnish Tax Administration, the Population Register Centre, and the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy. Information will be requested from the registers on a case-by-case basis. Identification of individuals will not be possible from the information disclosed to the researchers.

Significance of the survey

The survey will represent the first set of data on the development of the health and physical fitness of the entire population of Finland. Without this information, public healthcare services cannot be planned and developed effectively. Much of the information will also be beneficial to you personally, which is why many of the results will also be disclosed to you. Data on factors that affect the health and illnesses of the entire population are extremely important for promoting health and well-being among all citizens.

The most important earlier data on the health of Finnish citizens are based on surveys representing the entire population (Mini-Finland 1978–1980 and Health 2000 (2000–2001)). The new survey, Health 2011, is the third in the series, and it will produce globally unprecedented data on the development of health and the factors underlining this development over a period of more than 30 years. The data will allow us to develop the promotion of health and healthcare much better than before.

Data processing and privacy of personal information

The data will be used in public health research aimed at analysing the development and current status of health and physical fitness as well as the significance of underlying factors. To this end, the information provided by you, your results, and data pooled from public registers will be used together.

The information provided by you and all samples will be stored in a safe location so that third parties are unable to access them. Your personal data, results, and records pooled from public registers will remain confidential in the computers of the National Institute for Health and Welfare. The computers cannot be accessed from the outside. In addition to researchers employed by the National Institute for Health and Welfare, the data will be processed by researchers at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), the Finnish Centre for Pensions, and certain universities. All data disclosed by the National Institute for Health and Welfare will be submitted without personal identification numbers, and identification of individuals will not be possible. When the data are processed at the National Institute for Health and Welfare, your personal information will be kept separate from your results. No researcher will therefore be able to identify you. All employees of the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the other participating organisations have also signed a non-disclosure agreement.

The blood samples taken in the course of the survey will be stored frozen at the National Institute for Health and Welfare so that they can only be identified on the basis of a survey identification code. The samples may be used to carry out various tests at a later date (e.g. all genes), but the results of these tests will only be used in scientific studies concerning public health, chronic illnesses (e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, gastrointestinal disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, psychological and neurological diseases, asthma and allergies), and the associated risk factors.

The data will be controlled by the National Institute for Health and Welfare, they will be carefully archived according to legislation and good research practice, and they will only be used in scientific studies concerning public health.

Further information

All personnel participating in the survey will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the survey in connection with your appointment. Further information is also available from the National Institute for Health and Welfare, from the field study coordinator Mr Tomi Mäkinen on 020 610 8690 and the leading researcher Prof. MD Seppo Koskinen on 020 610 8762.

The Health 2011 survey will be largely based on the format of the Health 2000 survey carried out by the National Public Health Institute in 2000 and 2001. For more information on the Health 2000 survey and the key results of the survey, please visit www.terveys2000.fi.

Your participation is very important!