

## Frequently Asked Questions – COVID-19 Antibody Study

### I have been asked to participate in the MTP COVID-19 Antibody Study. What do I need to know?

Some 750 MTP participants who previously completed our 2020 COVID-19 questionnaire are being invited to provide a small blood spot sample in summer 2021. Here's what they need to know.



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### My first and second COVID-19 vaccine doses were different vaccines, but the COVID-19 Antibody Study questionnaire asks “Which vaccine did you receive?” and only allows me to select one vaccine name. What should I do?

If you have received **two different vaccines**, please choose “Other” and enter/type both vaccine names in the answer space, in the order you received them, and with a comma separating the names.

### What is the MTP and CanPath COVID-19 Antibody Study?

The Manitoba Tomorrow Project (MTP) is asking a subset of around 750 participants who completed the COVID-19 Questionnaire (in July – December 2020) to also provide a small blood spot sample, which will be analyzed to detect antibodies to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. If you have been invited to take part, please read these FAQs to learn more about the initiative.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented public health challenge, and it is important that scientists and policymakers understand how prevalent this disease is among the general public. This study aims to find out how many Canadians have developed antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19, by measuring antibodies from a donated blood spot sample. The study also includes a questionnaire that has questions about symptoms you may have experienced, testing, treatment, and also how the pandemic and physical distancing requirements have affected your daily life and well-being. We will also be asking questions about access to vaccines, and whether you have received a COVID-19 vaccine. This study will capture important data that will support researchers who are working on projects related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This data may also be used in conjunction with the questionnaire data and biological samples you have provided to us in the past.

### Who is conducting the COVID-19 Antibody Study?

The Manitoba Tomorrow Project is part of the Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow's Health (CanPath), which has received funding from the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force (CITF) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to collect information related to COVID-19 immunization. All CanPath cohorts are participating in this initiative. This includes the MTP, as well as Atlantic PATH, CARTaGENE (Quebec), Ontario Health Study, Alberta's Tomorrow Project, and the BC Generations Project.

We will collect data to share with researchers across Canada and internationally to investigate COVID-19 infection rates in the Canadian population, to understand the science behind COVID-19 immunity, and to study health related outcomes.

### **Who is funding the COVID-19 Antibody Study?**

CanPath's COVID-19 Antibody Study is funded by the Government of Canada, through Canada's COVID-19 Immunity Task Force (CITF), and by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The Manitoba Tomorrow Project (MTP) also receives funding from the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer.

### **Who can participate in the COVID-19 Antibody Study?**

In summer 2021, the MTP will reach out to 750 Project participants, inviting them to participate in the COVID-19 Antibody Study. Participants will be randomly selected from among those who completed our 2020 COVID-19 questionnaire. Selected participants will be asked to complete another COVID-19 questionnaire and use a home blood collection kit to provide a blood spot sample, and mail it back.

### **Can I participate in the COVID-19 Antibody Study if I have received a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Yes. If you have received an invitation to participate in the COVID-19 Antibody Study from your regional cohort, you can participate whether you have or have not received a COVID-19 vaccine. The questionnaire will ask if you have received a COVID-19 vaccine and this information will be linked to your blood spot sample.

### **Can I participate in the COVID-19 Antibody Study if I have not had COVID-19?**

Yes. If you have received an invitation to participate in the COVID-19 Antibody Study from your regional cohort, you can participate whether you have or have not received a positive COVID-19 test result. The questionnaire will ask if you have been tested for COVID-19 and what the results were, and this information will be linked to your blood spot sample.

### **Can I participate in more than one COVID-19 research study?**

Yes. You can participate in this COVID-19 Antibody Study even if you are participating in other COVID-19 research studies.

### **What is a blood spot sample?**

A blood spot sample is a process where a few drops of blood are collected on a piece of filter paper and dried. In this study, blood will be collected through a finger prick.

### **Why am I being asked to give a blood spot sample?**

Your blood spot sample will be used to conduct a serology test, also known as an antibody test.

### **What is serology or antibody testing?**

Serological tests do **not** detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) itself. Instead, they detect the antibodies your immune system produces in response to an infection or after receiving a vaccine. Serology tests are also known as antibody tests.

The immune response to a virus involves the creation of different types of antibodies produced at different stages of an infection:

1. Early antibodies, called IgM antibodies, provide the first indication of the body's response to an infection. These antibodies are not as specific and generally are not as long lasting, so interpreting their significance requires clinical experience
2. IgG antibodies are specific to a virus, such as the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Early research results suggest these antibodies can be reliably detected 14 days after a person is infected with COVID-19 or receives a COVID-19 vaccine

The MTP and CanPath will be testing dried blood spots sampled from participants for IgG antibodies that are specific to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

The relationship between antibodies and immunity to infection with SARS-CoV-2 is still unknown. It is unclear whether people with antibodies are immune to re-infection or if they are still infectious to others.

Antibodies are present for an undetermined period of time after an infection has ended.

Serological studies, such as this one, aim to investigate these unknowns to provide a better understanding of COVID-19 and to identify how Canadians and public health officials can best respond to and manage the threat of the virus within our population.

#### **Will I get the results of the antibody testing?**

Yes, we will return the results of your COVID-19 serological test to you. It is expected to take up to three months to receive the test results. You will get an email from the MTP team with your test result.

You will receive one of three possible results: a positive result confirming that there are COVID-19 antibodies or COVID-19 vaccine antibodies in your blood, a negative result indicating that there are no COVID-19 antibodies or COVID-19 vaccine antibodies in your blood, or a technical failure result stating that an error occurred with the sample or analysis and the lab could not determine if COVID-19 antibodies or COVID-19 vaccine antibodies were present.

The antibodies being tested for in this study become detectable approximately 10 to 14 days following infection or vaccination. Please consult your regular health practitioner if you have any questions about the findings from your blood spot sample.

#### **When can I expect to receive the results of the antibody test of my blood spot sample?**

Study participants can expect to get the results of the antibody test of their blood spot sample approximately three months after returning their blood spot sample to a Canada Post mailbox.

#### **Can the test detect antibodies from a COVID-19 vaccine? Can the test differentiate between antibodies from COVID-19 exposure compared to antibodies from the vaccine?**

Information about antibodies and the COVID-19 vaccine is evolving quickly. This study aims to help answer questions about COVID-19 antibodies and immunity. By participating in this study, you will help us answer some of these very timely questions.

### **When will this study be conducted?**

The blood spot samples will be collected from MTP participants between July and August 2021. For those selected to partake in the part of the study funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR study), a second and third blood spot sample will be collected 6 and 12 months after the first sample is collected.

### **How will my blood sample be used?**

The blood spot sample you provide will be tested for antibodies to COVID-19. Once the lab analysis is complete, your sample will be returned for secure storage at the Manitoba Tomorrow Project. Your sample may be used in the future by approved researchers for further health research, just like the biological samples many participants have provided upon joining the MTP.

### **How do I do the blood spot test?**

Instructions to complete the blood spot sample collection will be provided in the mailed kit and can be found online [here](#) and in [this YouTube video](#).

### **I didn't receive/lost my test kit. Could you send me another one?**

For any questions regarding your test kit, please contact us by email at [ccmbtomorrow@cancercare.mb.ca](mailto:ccmbtomorrow@cancercare.mb.ca) or by telephone at 1-855-588-0658.

### **Didn't I just complete an MTP COVID-19 study?**

Yes. Over 100,000 CanPath participants, including over 1,000 MTP participants completed the 2020 COVID-19 Questionnaire. Thank you! The information collected by this questionnaire is providing researchers and public health professionals with great insights into how the pandemic has affected the health and well-being of Canadians. This will help them understand how best to respond to the current COVID-19 pandemic as it evolves, and will also inform future pandemic responses.

Now, MTP and CanPath are conducting a new COVID-19 serology study to see which Canadians have developed antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19. This study will capture important data that will support researchers who are working on projects related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This new study builds on the information already captured by the previous COVID-19 questionnaire, including potential sources of exposure to the virus, such as those experienced by volunteers and frontline workers.

### **Why are MTP and CanPath, which focus on studies of cancer and chronic disease, participating in COVID-19 research?**

This serology study aims to find out how many Canadians have developed antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the virus that causes COVID-19. The results of this study will show who has been exposed to the virus, and why immune systems respond differently to the virus.

In addition to understanding the direct health impacts of COVID-19 infection, we see [growing evidence](#) that there may be [links](#) between infectious diseases (like viruses and bacteria) and non-infectious chronic diseases (like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancers). We hope that comparing the findings of our study with data on health and lifestyle factors will help determine whether a coronavirus infection may have long-term effects on chronic disease.

As longitudinal studies following participants for up to 50 years, The Manitoba Tomorrow Project and CanPath are uniquely positioned to investigate the long-term effects of COVID-19 on Canadians.

### **Who will see the results of my blood spot sample?**

The results of the serological (antibody) test obtained from your blood spot sample and any additional health measurements will be stored in the MTP database (at CancerCare Manitoba), and in the CanPath national database (at the University of Toronto in Ontario). Your personal information will be stored in a *separate* database from the survey and serological (antibody) test data, and will only be accessible to a small number of MTP staff. A 'key' linking your personal information to your unique code will be stored in a locked, separate physical location, and accessible only by the study team. No information that could directly identify you will be stored in the CanPath databases.

Some coded and de-identified questionnaire data and antibody test results will also be shared with the federal COVID-19 Immunity Task Force (CITF), which funded the study. A copy of your questionnaire and the test results from your blood spot sample will be stored in a database at McGill University. Only the information and test results collected as part of this study will be part of the CITF database. No other information you have provided to the MTP will be part of this database, and the CITF will not be able to link your data to you as an individual.

### **How is my privacy protected?**

Your data will be protected using current security safeguards. These safeguards include keeping your personal information separate from study data, assigning a unique code number to identifying information, and only releasing coded data to approved researchers.