Volunteer FAQ

Volunteers

Page 28-30

Contents

Volunteer FAQ
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What is the overall objective of ResearchMatch.org?
ResearchMatch aims to serve as an effective, useful and complementary recruitment tool that will help connect willing volunteers with researchers who are searching for appropriate volunteers to be placed in their research studies (not just clinical trials).

Why is ResearchMatch important?
Research affects our everyday lives – ranging from the medicine we take to what we learn in school. Much of research requires people to participate so a researcher can test out a theory or hypothesis about an important question. Even now, many research studies end too early since there are too few volunteers to join. Also, there are many people who want to join research studies but do not know how to do so. Different people have different reasons for wanting to get involved in research. ResearchMatch is not aiming to convince you to participate, it is only providing a resource to help you learn more about studies that you may qualify for or may be fitting to your interests. Learn more about what research is in general here.

Who is involved in ResearchMatch?
ResearchMatch is a registry created through collaborations between a large network of major academic institutions and is funded by the National Center for Research Resources – a component of the National Institute of Health. All of the sites participating in this Network have signed extensive agreements to protect your privacy as a Volunteer. Further, only researchers who have been approved by their institution to use this tool will have the ability to search the registry and possibly send an initial recruitment message to you. Vanderbilt University serves as the host institution of this site-neutral national registry.

What does it cost to join ResearchMatch?
ResearchMatch is a not-for-profit activity and is free to join.

Who can join?
Anyone from the United States can join ResearchMatch. All ages and backgrounds are welcome. A parent, legal guardian or caretaker may register someone under the age of 19 or an adult that may not be able to enter in his/her own information.

What if I do not have a health condition - can I still join?
Healthy volunteers are absolutely vital to research and thus ResearchMatch encourages you to join if you are interested.

How can ResearchMatch benefit me?
You may benefit from joining ResearchMatch as it may: Reduce the time that you spend searching for research studies that you qualify for; improve the chances of matching you with research studies that interest you; help you learn more about the research in your community or in your area of interest; and, get you involved in a national group of volunteers that might help improve the positive health impacts of future research for everyone.
Are there any risks to joining?
There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality of your profile information, but ResearchMatch makes many efforts to keep your personal information private, secure, and confidential until you allow ResearchMatch to release it. There is a chance you could be inconvenienced by receiving too many emails from researchers using ResearchMatch when your anonymous profile is ‘matched’ with their research studies. If you feel that you are getting too many emails, you may always remove yourself from ResearchMatch.

Is ResearchMatch only for clinical trials?
No, ResearchMatch will help match any type of approved study looking for people to participate in their study. You may be contacted about different research opportunities ranging from a survey you can do at home to a clinical trial that may involve your traveling to the researcher’s institution.

What happens once I register?
After you register, your profile (without the contact information) will be searchable by researchers who are authorized to use ResearchMatch. If a researcher thinks your profile matches their study’s needs, you may receive a message through ResearchMatch from that researcher which tells you a bit more information about the study. You may easily respond Yes or No if you wish to learn more. A yes response will release your contact information to the researcher so they may contact you directly with more information. A no response will keep your contact information hidden. Please remember that even if you respond yes through ResearchMatch, you are never obligated to participate in a study. ResearchMatch is only helping you be connected with the researcher. The choice to participate or not is yours. See the Volunteer Agreement for more information.

How does ResearchMatch protect my information?
ResearchMatch takes your privacy very seriously. ResearchMatch is a secure, central database that will store your information if you wish to be matched with research studies, now or in the future. All ResearchMatch data that is sent between the web server and browsers will be coded (encrypted) using Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) protection. Another protection is that ResearchMatch will not release your personal contact information until you have given permission for that release. The ResearchMatch registry is a collaborative project between all participating sites, but is maintained at Vanderbilt and overseen by the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board. ResearchMatch will never sell, rent or lease your personal information. Please see the ResearchMatch Privacy Statement for more details.

Since I am entering in my phone number, will I start getting a lot of calls if I join the registry?
How many calls you get will be up to you! When you create your ResearchMatch profile, your contact details are ‘hidden’ from researchers who are searching the registry for possible matches to their studies. Researchers actually send their first message about their study to you through ResearchMatch and we route this message to you without the researcher knowing who you are. This way, it is your decision if you wish for your contact information to be shown to the researcher or not after you read more about their study. If you allow your contact information be revealed to the researcher, then the researcher will have your contact information and may then tell you more details about their study if you appear to qualify. Please read the Volunteer Agreement for more information.

What if my contact and/or health information has changed?
You can change your profile at any time. You only have to log in with your unique username and password to make these changes.
When will I start to hear from researchers if I join ResearchMatch?
ResearchMatch is a new national initiative. Before researchers can effectively use the registry, a large number of volunteers will need to be a part of ResearchMatch. As such, researchers will not be given access to begin looking for potential study Volunteers through ResearchMatch until approximately January 2010. Please remember that ResearchMatch cannot guarantee that you will actually be contacted by any researchers, even after researchers are able to start looking for 'matches' through this online tool, although it is certainly our hope that these contacts will occur.

Do I have to participate in a research study if I join ResearchMatch?
No, you will never have to participate in a study. It is always your choice!

What if I change my mind about being part of ResearchMatch?
You can remove yourself from ResearchMatch at any time. You simply log in to your profile and select this option. Once you do this, all of your identifiable information will be removed and future researchers who are searching the registry will not be able to search for you. However, you may still be able to be contacted by those researchers you have already released your contact information to through ResearchMatch.

What can I do if I have more questions?
For general questions, please email ResearchMatch at info@researchmatch.org or visit the ResearchMatch Contact page to submit your question or comment. Also, your suggestions about how we can improve this resource for you are always welcome!