CLINICAL TRIALS FACT SHEET

If you've ever had the flu or a bad headache, you may have been prescribed a medication by your doctor to help you feel better. Most people don't realize that these medicines are only available because they first went through a special kind of testing known as a clinical trial.

What is a clinical trial?

A clinical trial involves research to see whether a new medicine or treatment is safe to use and whether it works. Each clinical trial tries to answer a question. For example, "How do I prevent a certain disease?" It could also ask, "How do I diagnose this disease?" or "How do I treat this disease?"

The information discovered during a clinical trial might change how patients are diagnosed or treated. Clinical trials may help find out whether a new treatment works better or has fewer side effects than other treatments.

Why are clinical trials important?

Clinical trials are an essential step in the process of developing new medicines.

- They help researchers better understand diseases and how to prevent them
- They help doctors learn how to better diagnose diseases
- They might lead to new, more improved treatment options
- They help make sure that treatments are safe and effective
- They give people the opportunity to play a part in important discoveries

Who can participate in a clinical trial?

Each clinical trial has different rules and participation needs. For example, some clinical trials may need participation from healthy adults in a certain age group. Other trials might need participation from people who have a specific disease or medical condition.

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Why do people decide to join a clinical trial?

People decide to volunteer for clinical trials for many different reasons, including to

- Help others find a better treatment
- Help doctors better understand diseases and treatments

How does a clinical trial work?

Clinical trials often compare an investigational drug with a placebo. A placebo is a pill or liquid that does not contain any active medicine. In a clinical trial, some people receive the investigational drug, and others may receive the placebo. Researchers compare these results to see if the investigational drug is safe and effective.

Every clinical trial has a plan called a protocol. The protocol describes the main question the trial seeks to answer, whether any tests will be completed, and what information will be collected by researchers.

If you choose to participate in a clinical trial, you'll be told what to expect and what you might experience. You'll also have a chance to ask any questions you have about the trial. Clinical trials are completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating at any time. You can continue to see your regular doctor throughout the clinical trial.

Are clinical trials safe for participants?

Clinical trials are reviewed by a committee called an institutional review board (IRB). This committee is made up of doctors, scientists, and other people in the community who are not a part of the clinical trial. The job of the IRB is to

- Confirm that the clinical trial is ethical, or fair, for everyone who is involved
- Protect the rights and safety of the people in the clinical trial
- Make sure that the risks are as low as possible

How can I get information about a specific clinical trial?

For questions, please talk with your doctor. They will be able to help you through the process of taking part in a clinical trial.

Don't forget!

Participating in a clinical trial is your choice. No one can make you join, and you have the right to stop participating at any point.

The scientific community appreciates everyone who participates in clinical trials. Medications that perhaps you have needed—or maybe people you know have needed—were made possible in part by people who participated in clinical trials.

For additional information regarding clinical trials, please visit https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/about-studies/learn and/or refer to your healthcare provider.

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