Researchers must keep information about you confidential. That means they cannot share the information with anyone except those mentioned in the informed consent document. The researchers report the results of the study at scientific meetings, in professional journals, to study sponsors, and to various government agencies. However, the names of the participants are never used in any reports.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the USF Division of Research Integrity & Compliance at (813) 974-5638 or at the address below.

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Volunteering For Medical Research

It’s a Big Decision!
Here are some facts to help you decide.

For more information....

To find a research study near you, go to www.clinicaltrials.gov

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the USF Division of Research Integrity & Compliance at (813) 974-5638 or at the address below.

How can I prepare for the first meeting with the researchers?

- Make a list of questions to ask.
- Bring a friend or relative along for support and to hear the responses to your questions.
- Bring a pen and paper to take notes.
- Ask questions or stop the discussion if you don’t understand what is being said.
Without research, medicine would not have made the advances that we enjoy today. For you and for future patients, research is essential. Volunteering for medical research provides participants with opportunities to contribute to society, to the community, and to others who have health problems. Those who volunteer in medical research are participating in the development of new medical treatments that may be more effective or that may lead to cures for life-threatening and chronic diseases.

This brochure addresses some of the frequently asked questions about medical research studies. In addition to reading this brochure, it is often helpful to talk to family members, a physician, counselor, and/or friends as you try to decide whether or not to volunteer for a medical research study.

A research study is an organized activity that is designed to answer a question or problem. Any research study that collects information about people or uses existing information or specimens collected from people is considered human subject research.

There are many different types of research studies. Medical research tries to find answers about specific health questions. Some research studies determine whether experimental treatments are better than those currently used. Medical researchers hope that their studies will help to improve health care and people’s health.

Each study has specific requirements about who can participate. Using specific requirements is an important principle of research that helps to produce reliable results. These requirements are called inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria define specific conditions or characteristics that make it appropriate to enroll a person into a study. Exclusion criteria define conditions or characteristics that would make it inappropriate for a person to be enrolled.

These criteria are often based on such factors as age, gender, medical history, current health, and past medical treatments. Some research studies seek subjects with specific illnesses or conditions, while others need healthy subjects.

A person must qualify for the study before being asked to join as a human subject. It is important to understand that these criteria are not used to reject people personally. Instead, the criteria identify appropriate participants and help minimize the risks those participants face. The criteria also help researchers answer the research questions.

Ethical codes and laws protect the safety and rights of people who take part in research.

Federal law requires that research studies be approved and monitored by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB oversight ensures that a research study is ethical and that the safety and rights of participants are protected. It also makes sure that the risks are as low as possible and that there are potential benefits, either to the participants or to individuals in the future.

The IRB is an independent committee of professional people such as doctors and college teachers, as well as members of the community. All universities, hospitals, and other institutions that conduct or support human subject research must have that research reviewed by an IRB.

Find out as much as you can about the research. A member of the research team should answer all of your questions about the study. Some of the answers may be found in the informed consent document. Before you decide, be sure you know the answers to these questions:
- What is the research question (purpose)?
- What should I expect while I’m a participant?
- What tests and treatments are involved?
- How do the known risks, possible side effects, and potential benefits in the study compare with alternatives that are available to me?
- How might this research affect my daily life?
- Will there be any costs to me?
- How long will I be involved in the study?
- Who is going to be in the study?