

# Donate Biospecimens

You have biospecimens that could help scientists study cancers affecting you, your family and friends.

## What are biospecimens?

Biospecimens are materials taken from the human body that contain info about you and about your disease. They include tissue (hair and skin) and fluids (blood, urine, or saliva).

Biospecimens can be used in directing patient care or processed and stored for future medical research to find new ways to prevent, diagnose, or treat cancer and other diseases.



**Biorepositories** (also known as biobanks) are “libraries” of stored biospecimens that are made available to scientists for research purposes.



Photos of biorepositories by Katherine Briant, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

- Biospecimen samples are for research; not for transplants.
- Donors’ personal/medical info accompanies samples; however, protecting the privacy of this personal and medical information is the biobanks’ priority

## Why are biospecimens important to cancer research?

### Biospecimens...

- Contain cellular, molecular, and chemical information
- Contain associated personal and medical info (age, sex, ethnicity, etc.)
- Include info about a donor's lifetime environmental exposures (diet, tobacco smoke, sunlight, toxic chemicals, infectious agents, etc.)



Photo from Diane A. Reid, NCI

**Having a large supply of biospecimens is essential for researchers to study causes of and solutions to cancer. They can examine hundreds or thousands of biospecimens to answer research questions.**

## Collecting and using biospecimens for research

### Types of biospecimens used in research:

- Residual or extra tissue taken for the patient's diagnosis and treatment, i.e., blood draw, biopsy, surgery
- Tissue donated specifically for research purposes, i.e., saliva, urine
- Excess normal tissue, i.e., nails and hair clippings, elective surgery

Remember, your tissue cannot be used for research without your written consent.

## Find out more about donating biospecimens!

**Talk to your doctor or nurse**

**Contact the National Cancer Institute's  
Office of Biorepositories and Biospecimen Research**

E-mail: [nciobbbr@mail.nih.gov](mailto:nciobbbr@mail.nih.gov)

Web: <http://biospecimens.cancer.gov>

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