

## Live questions and answers from the MESA Town Hall Webinars

**1. General: How many participants? At the start? Still participating? By the six areas?**

MESA recruited 6814 participants in approximately equal proportions from 6 clinic field centers. Today, 4266 or 62% are still alive and active in the study.

**2. General: Have you found benefits to vitamins and supplements. obviously vit D and fish oils have been shown somewhat beneficial.**

MESA and other studies have observed benefits from a healthy diet including fish and a healthier diet composition (vegetables/fruit/fiber) Vitamin D has been shown to be beneficial, as of yet we have not shown a benefit from other vitamins or supplements. In addition, MESA has conducted a very innovative study attempting to understand the effect of vitamin D on genes to think about how that information can help us understand the mechanism behind Vitamin D's beneficial effect.

**3. General: Will slides be made available after the webinar?**

The Town Hall Webinar recordings are available on the MESA website at <https://tinyurl.com/MESATownHall>.

**4. C4R/COVID-19: Are all participants getting the COVID-19 surveys?**

Yes, all participants will be asked to complete the COVID survey during a MESA Follow-up phone call, a MESA Mind visit, or a separate COVID-specific phone call.

**5. C4R/COVID-19: Will participants receive results of their antibody status?**

The C4R bloodspot will be used to determine if you have antibodies (evidence of an immune system response) to COVID-19. This test will provide important information for the study regarding whether you have previously been infected with COVID-19, which is important even if you have now been vaccinated. The results of this test will be returned to you. In the future, you may be asked to return to repeat some tests that were previously performed in MESA in order to understand how COVID-19 may affect your long-term health.

**6. C4R/COVID-19: Which of the COVID-19 vaccine do you think is best to get?**

Given what we know now about the risks of COVID-19 and the protection provided by COVID-19 vaccines, we encourage MESA participants to be vaccinated for COVID-19. To learn more about the vaccines available to you, we recommend that you reach out to your doctor and review the information available on the CDC website or from your local health department.

**7. C4R/COVID-19: Should I have received the first COVID questionnaire by now?**

Not everyone has received a phone call yet to complete the MESA COVID-19 questionnaire, but everyone should receive a phone call by the end of May.

**8. C4R/COVID-19: I have just come out of quarantine after being infected with COVID. I have not yet been vaccinated. Will it matter if I have antibodies from both infection and vaccination by the time I get the blood spot kit?**

I'm sorry you were infected and hope you feel better! We hope you complete the blood spot kit whenever you get it -- no matter the timing of your infection or vaccination. It will give us important information, no matter what. We understand you may have more questions and you should definitely ask them when we call you about the kit.

**9. Genetics: Is there a way I can find out which diseases/conditions I may get, or not get, according to my DNA? If there's a high likelihood I could get a disease, is there an alteration of my DNA that could be done to prevent it?**

Your DNA may predict the possibility of getting a disease, but environment, diet and lifestyle play a big role. In most cases many genes and environment play a role in health and disease, not just one. So there are not ways to alter your DNA to prevent disease. But we may be able to help prevent disease if we know your genes predispose you to getting a certain disease.

**10. Health Disparities: How well do MESA participant represent the average Black and White participants across the country? Do the disparities that we see in MESA represent larger population disparities?**

What we know about MESA and MESA participants was really nicely highlighted by Dr. Burke. Participants in MESA tend to be healthier than the general population. As you may remember, in order to be part of MESA you had to be free of cardiovascular disease. We have to acknowledge that there are differences between MESA and the general population, but there are enough commonalities that we can learn a lot about disparities by studying it in MESA.

**11. Health Disparities: How do you handle the participant who moved from inner city to suburban areas during the study?**

Great question! We add up the time you may have lived in the inner city with the exposure you may have had when you moved into the suburbs. We make sure to take into account how long you lived in each of these two different places.

**12. MESA Mind: Will there be more cognitive testing done in the future?**

Yes, in addition to the cognitive assessments that are being done right now in the first MESA Mind visit (2019-2021), there will be repeat cognitive assessments at the second MESA Mind Visit in 2022-2023.

**13. MESA Mind: What details will my MESA Mind results letter include? How may I get these?**

At one time point, cognitive assessments provide excellent information about your specific strengths and challenges in thinking and memory. Your performance is very specific to you, and influenced by your age, education, and many other factors. MESA Mind doesn't try to give a clinical diagnosis or provide much specific detail at this first assessment. We consider this your baseline function and we use this to look for change over time.

The power of MESA Mind comes from repeating this assessment every 2-3 years to track your individual change in areas of cognitive function (e.g. memory, learning, processing speed, language, etc.). This provides a more accurate picture of your cognitive health and potential risk for age-related cognitive problems. We are happy to share this information with your doctor at your request.

MESA Mind also creates images of brain with MRI and PET. When you complete the brain MRI, we will also send you a photo of your brain for you to keep.

Remember, the detailed cognitive assessments in MESA MIND is supposed to be difficult, like an exercise for your brain.

**14. MESA Mind: How can I maintain my cognitive function or improve memory? Do you recommend any medications for improving memory? Is Alzheimer's disease preventable?**

Recent reports have summarized for us what we currently know about prevention, treatment and care for dementia, [https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736\(20\)30367-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(20)30367-6/fulltext)

A few key messages is that while Alzheimer's disease and other age-related dementias are difficult to treat, they are largely preventable! These age-related dementias are not

inevitable and rarely predestined by our genes. That means we can work to reduce our risk over our life by: getting more education; quitting smoking; treating common medical issues like hypertension, diabetes, depression, and hearing loss; exercising more; and maintaining close social contacts.

Let's review a few of these in detail:

First, we think that moving more is very important for brain health. Exercise is not just about going to the gym. It is also about moving more. Exercise is not just good for your heart; it also supplies more blood to your brain. Second, thinking more, learning more, and socializing more are also thought to improve your brain health. Finally, controlling blood pressure and conditions like diabetes are also important for your brain health. The top two actions that you can take to keep your brain healthy are controlling your blood pressure and controlling your diabetes.

If these sound familiar, it is because most of these are also recommendations for improving cardiovascular health.

In essence, heart health = brain health. This partly why we study brain health in MESA Mind.

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