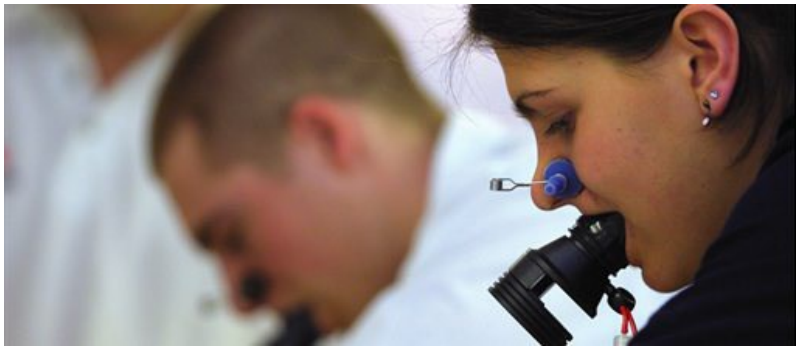
University of Birmingham

Get involved in our research



We regularly require volunteers for our research studies and our local community frequently get involved as participants, helping to shape new ideas and approaches. From assisting studies into balance and falling to investigations into the positive effects of exercise, you can be a part of our research and help to make a positive impact.

The following studies are currently recruiting for participants. You can find out more about any of the studies using the contact details provided.

Open all sections

How we make decisions about food

Two part study with payment (£40 and travel expenses)

We are looking for participants to take part in this study. You will attend two sessions and complete simple computer tasks and questionnaires that help us to understand how people make decisions about portion sizes.

To be eligible to participate your BMI must be more than 30 (see information on **how to calculate your BMI (http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx)**). For your help with this study we will be able to compensate you generously and cover any travel costs to the University. For more information please email Kim Verlaers on **KXV276@bham.ac.uk (mailto:kxv276@bham.ac.uk)** .

The end date for recruitment to the study is 31 March 2013.

How does exercise affect the immune system?

We are looking to recruit male and female participants between 50 and 64 years old to take part in our study into the immune system. We want to investigate your immune response to two vaccinations following a brisk walk or a control task, to examine whether exercise enhances antibody response.

This involves attending our laboratory twice over a one month period. Upon completion of the study you will receive £30.

If you have been previously vaccinated with influenza (in the last year) or pneumonia (last ten years), or have an immune or other disorder then unfortunately you are not eligible for this study.

For more information please contact Jo Long:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8743
Email: **jel501@bham.ac.uk (mailto:jel501@bham.ac.uk)**

The effects of bereavement on immunity in adults

We hope to investigate the effects of bereavement on health and appreciate volunteers for this study due to its sensitive nature. If you have recently suffered a bereavement then perhaps you would like to contribute to our study. Your participation would help us to find out the impact of bereavement and other factors on individuals' immune functioning. This knowledge may impact upon patient care and medical practice.

We will invite you to attend an appointment within two months of your bereavement either at the University or a place of your choosing.

At this appointment we would like to take a blood sample (20 ml = just over 1 tablespoon) to measure the function of your immune system. We will also ask you to complete some questionnaires asking you about how you are feeling at the moment and your general level of health.

Some of the questions will be asking about your feelings about your bereavement, so may be upsetting. This session will take approximately one hour.

For more information please contact Dr Anna Phillips:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 4398
Email: **a.c.phillips@bham.ac.uk (mailto:a.c.phillips@bham.ac.uk)**

The effects of exercise and stress on adults over 60 years

We would like participants over 60 years of age for a research study into the activity of the body's hormone and immune systems after exercise.

We will require you to take saliva samples prior to a visit to the University, where we will take three blood samples: one on arrival, one immediately after exercise and the final sample one hour after exercise. The exercise will consist of a brisk walk on a treadmill, increasing in gradient to increase your heart rate.

You will receive feedback on your level of fitness based on the walking test. Your participation would help us to find out the impact of exercise and stress on individuals'

hormonal and immune activity. This knowledge may help us to understand the changes in our bodily systems which accompany ageing and how exercise and stress influence this.

For more information please contact Jennifer Heaney:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8747 or 07841527101
Email: **jlh807@bham.ac.uk (mailto:jlh807@bham.ac.uk)**

Studies into development in children with autism

The goal of this research program is to better understand early brain and behavioural development in autism and related developmental disorders. By doing so, we hope to contribute to the development of diagnostic and intervention methods for helping infants and toddlers with autism or at-risk for developing autism in the future.

We will ask participating infants to visit our laboratory at the University two or three times within a five week period.

Compensation for travel to the laboratory and small gift toys are provided for all of our participants. For parents who live outside of the greater Birmingham/West Midlands region, we may arrange for travel by train and hotel accommodation.

Study of language development in siblings of children with autism

We are currently seeking 20 to 36 month old siblings of children with autism spectrum disorders for participation in a behavioural and EEG study of language development.

Our assessments evaluate speech and language development and processing. All of the assessments are safe, non-invasive measures that we have used in previous studies to test infants in the general population.

Study of language processing in young children with autism

Required: two to six year-old, high-functioning children with autism spectrum disorders for participation in a behavioural and EEG study of language development.

This assessment will evaluate speech and language development and processing. This includes wearing a child-friendly EEG sensor net while watching a video and listening to sounds.

Study of emotional face and voice processing in young children with autism

Required: three to six year-old, high-functioning children with autism spectrum disorders for participation in a behavioural and EEG study of emotional face and voice processing. These include wearing a child-friendly EEG sensor net while watching pictures of emotional faces and listening to emotional voices.

Study of visual processing in children with utism

Required: six to 12 year old, high-functioning children with autism spectrum disorders for participation in behavioural, eye-tracking, and EEG studies of visual processing and perception. These may include wearing a child-friendly EEG sensor net while looking at pictures presented on a computer monitor.

Eligibility for the studies

In the above Autism studies, children will also complete behavioural assessments, including assessments of word understanding and word production.

To participate in the studies, your child must meet the following criteria:

- Diagnosis of Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder not otherwise specified, or Aspergers Syndrome
- Between two and six years of age
- Child does not currently have a major intellectual delay
- No major primary sensory impairment (for example: blindness, deafness)
- No known history of seizure disorder
- Meet other inclusionary criteria

For more information please contact Dr Joe McCleery:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 9775
Email: **j.p.mccleery@bham.ac.uk (mailto:j.p.mccleery@bham.ac.uk)**

How can we manage weight loss more effectively?

Are you a weight watcher? Do you struggle with motivation or are you highly motivated? We need you!

We are currently looking to interview those who have been a successful weight maintainer (those who have lost 10% of their initial weight and have kept it off for at least a year, within a range of 2.2kg) and those that have been unsuccessful at weight maintenance (those who have lost 10% of initial weight but have not been maintain that weight loss in the following year).

Your experiences can help us to understand how to manage weight loss more effectively.

For more information please contact Heather McKee:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8747
Email: **hcm908@bham.ac.uk (mailto:hcm908@bham.ac.uk)**

The effects of different forms of exercise training

The School of Sport and Exercise Sciences is pleased to offer a brand new type of exercise training programme!

We are looking to recruit subjects interested in improving their general health and fitness who fit the following criteria:

- Male
- Overweight or obese
- Aged 18-35 years
- Healthy (no known metabolic disorder)
- Not involved in regular exercise training (engaged in less than two sessions of 30 minutes of exercise per week for the last year)

As part of the project, we are interested in studying the effect of different forms of exercise training, three to five times per week, for a total of four weeks. The training programme will be tailored to suit each individual, and will be fully supervised. In return, all we ask is that volunteers complete a series of exercise, metabolic and cardiovascular tests before and after the training period.

For more information please contact either:

Matt Cocks
Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8745
Email: **mxc528@bham.ac.uk (mailto:mxc528@bham.ac.uk)**

Sam Shepherd
Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8746
Email: **sos489@bham.ac.uk (mailto:sos489@bham.ac.uk)**

What is the impact of stress on immune function?

We are currently looking for older adults for a study to examine whether the body's immune system is affected by stress. You can help us to find out the impact of acute short-term stress on immune function, particularly immunity against bacterial infections in older adults.

The study involves a short mental stress task or a control no-stress session, during which we will monitor blood pressure and heart rate. We will also take several blood samples and ask participants to complete some short questionnaires about general health and stress levels.

For more information please contact Mr Riyad Khanfer:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 7238
Email: **rms409@bham.ac.uk (mailto:rms409@bham.ac.uk)**

Is your New Year's resolution to lose weight?

A new SportEx study is giving people actively losing weight this year a unique opportunity to monitor their progress. Study participants will receive two body composition scans with full feedback absolutely free. One scan will be at the start of the study and a follow-up scan will be carried out a few months later.

For more information please contact Guy Taylor:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8738
Email: **gat690@bham.ac.uk (mailto:gat690@bham.ac.uk)**

How does exercise affect metabolism?

Exercise is known to be an effective weight loss strategy as it increases metabolism. Previous research has suggested that the demands of exercise in maintaining temperature may affect post-exercise metabolism. The aim of this study is to investigate the metabolic responses to brisk walking in different ambient temperatures.

We are currently recruiting non-smoking males and females aged 30-65 who are presently above ideal weight (i.e. BMI above 25 kg/m2), and participate in less than one hour of physical activity per week.

For more information please contact either:

Dr Andrew Blannin
Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 7353
Email: **a.k.blannin@bham.ac.uk (mailto:a.k.blannin@bham.ac.uk)**

Daniel Crabtree
Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8736
Email: **dxc877@bham.ac.uk (mailto:dxc877@bham.ac.uk)**

How do close relationships affect your motivation to lose weight?

Are you currently trying to lose or maintain weight, while someone close to you is trying to give you a push? Share your experience with us and help us to understand how your interaction with him or her might affect your motivation to exercise and diet!

We are conducting a research study to look at how your important others may affect your motivation to weight loss behaviours such as exercising and dieting. Participants will be asked to complete three sets of questionnaires over six months. Those who complete all sets of questionnaires would be given a £5 high street voucher for their participation. More importantly, we hope to find out ways to help you lose or maintain weight more effectively!

For more information please contact Johan Ng:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8745
Email: **yxn904@bham.ac.uk (mailto:yxn904@bham.ac.uk)**

Can successful weight loss alter perception?

We are looking for individuals who are actively trying to lose weight so that we can assess whether successful weight loss alters one's perception of spatial layout.

This research is designed to give scientists a better understanding of the inter-linkage between conscious vision and our bodily state. Study participants will have a unique opportunity to see the effects their weight loss has on their body thanks to the use of state of the art body composition scanning

The study will test the effect of significant weight loss on an individual's perception of spatial layout and the built environment.

For more information please contact Guy Taylor:

Telephone: +44 (0) 121 414 8738
Email: **gat690@bham.ac.uk (mailto:gat690@bham.ac.uk)**

Volunteers wanted to improve health and fitness by exercising less

We require volunteers to take part in a study investigating the use of high intensity interval training (HIT) as a means to improve health and fitness.

The research is seeking to assess how different modes of exercise training can affect cardiovascular and metabolic health in an obese population and is proposing that exercise training of a shorter duration can be as effective as endurance training. This proposes an attractive solution for individuals who simply cannot find the time to exercise.

Participants will undergo four weeks of supervised exercise training in two groups: endurance exercise training and high intensity interval training.

Before and after the training, a series of cardiovascular and metabolic tests will be carried out and participants will also receive exercise and nutritional advice and £50 to cover travel costs.

For more information please contact Sam Shepherd:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 8746
Email: **sos489@bham.ac.uk (mailto:sos489@bham.ac.uk)**

How does caregiving affect your immune system?

We want to understand the effects of the chronic stress of caregiving on immunity and how this interacts with the effects of ageing on immune function. Your participation will help us to find out how caregiving factors affect individuals' immune function and how this interacts with ageing.

This knowledge may impact upon patients' health and future medical practice. This study will assess the impact of caregiving the body's immune function and hormone levels.

At this session, we will take a blood sample and ask you to complete some questionnaires. There are several brief questionnaires including psychological tests and personal questions that measure stress, your general health, and the support you receive. In your blood, we will be measuring the activity of a certain type of immune cell and the levels of different stress hormones.

Our target groups are caregivers and a control group:

For caregivers:

- Of any age and a parent of a child (aged 3-18years) with an developmental disability including Autism, Downs syndrome, Prader-Willi, Smith-Magenis, Cornelia de Lange, Cri du Chat, Angelman, Rubinstein-Taybi, and Lowe
- Aged over 64 years and a spouse/partner and the main caregiver of a person with a diagnosis of dementia e.g. Alzheimers

For the controls:

- A parent of a typically developing child(ren) (i.e. *not* Autistic, Downs Syndrome etc.) aged 3-18 years
- Aged over 65 years and a spouse/partner of a person who *does not have* a diagnosis of dementia e.g. Alzheimers, Parkinsons

For more information please contact Dr Anna Phillips:

Telephone: +44 (0)121 414 4398
Email: **a.c.phillips@bham.ac.uk (mailto:a.c.phillips@bham.ac.uk)**

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