

## Parent/Guardian Information Statement and Consent Form

### The CATS Study: The Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study

**HREC Project Number:** 31089

**Principal Researcher:** Prof George Patton, Study Director, The Royal Children's Hospital

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Statement. This Information Statement is 3 pages long. There is also a separate Consent Form printed on YELLOW paper. If you don't speak much English we will provide you with this information in your own language. Please call Lisa Mundy on (03) 9345 7978.

#### What is an Information Statement?

These pages tell you about the research project. It explains all the steps and measures of the project. This is to help you to decide whether or not you want your child to take part in the research. Please read this Information Statement carefully. You can ask questions about anything in it. You may want to talk about the project with your family or friends.

Taking part in this research is voluntary. If you don't want your child to take part, you don't have to. You can take your child out of the project at any time. This will not affect their medical care from The Royal Children's Hospital or your child's education at school in any way.

Once you have an understanding of the project, please complete the consent form and send it back to your child's school (**whether or not you agree for your child to take part**).

#### 1. What is the research project about?

Your child's school has agreed to take part in this new study about growing up. The study is looking at what gives children a healthy start to adolescence in today's changing world.

The journey from childhood to adulthood begins with puberty. This is often a time of great change for families. For children there is a growing sense of who they are as well as changes in health.

The Centre for Adolescent Health at The Royal Children's Hospital and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute are working together to understand how to make puberty a positive time for children and their families. Puberty can begin as early as 8 years of age and so we are starting this study in grade 3. We will be following up students annually. We plan to recruit over 2000 children from primary schools across metropolitan Melbourne.

#### 2. Who is funding the research project?

This study is funded by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC).

#### 3. Why are we being asked to be in this research project?

You and your child have been asked to take part in this study along with other grade 3 students at school. We have randomly chosen 50 schools to take part. Your child's school was one of those chosen and has agreed to be involved. The survey will be done in the next few weeks. All the children in your child's year are being invited to take part. So we do hope you agree for your child to join the study.

#### 4. What do we need to do to be in this research project?

If you and your child agree to take part, we would ask you both to complete a questionnaire once a year, for the next few years. We would also measure your child's height, weight and waist circumference at each visit. On 3 occasions we would ask your child to provide a saliva (spit) sample. This will allow us to see whether the hormonal changes of puberty have begun.

We would also like to store some of this sample for use in future research related to puberty. The sample would be stored at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute. It would not have your child's or your name on

it. A human research ethics committee would give approval before the sample was used for a different study. You can choose whether you give consent for this by ticking the box on the consent form.

**For your child** the first part of the study will involve researchers coming to your child's school for around an hour. We will ask your child to do 3 things.

- i. Complete a simple questionnaire that asks your child how they like to spend their time, about their feelings (e.g. grumpy, sad or happy), as well as how they are getting on at home and at school. The questions will take approximately 20 minutes. A copy of the questionnaire can be seen at the school. If there are any questions that your son or daughter does not want to answer, they can skip them. All answers are kept **strictly confidential**. The results of the project will only be reported in ways that do not identify individual participants.
- ii. We will measure your child's height, weight and waist circumference. Your child's weight affects when puberty happens. These measures will be done in a private area, one student at a time. A qualified CATS researcher will do this. Your son or daughter will only need to take their shoes and jumpers or jackets off. The measures will be recorded against a unique identification number. No child's name will be recorded.
- iii. We will collect a small sample of saliva (spit) from your child. This will let us know whether the hormonal changes of puberty have begun. The saliva sample will be collected in a small plastic tube. Your child will be given a plastic straw through which to provide the sample and full instructions will be given.

We will also ask **you** to answer some questions. This will take no more than 30 minutes to do the first time and only around 10 minutes in later years. Some of the questions may seem sensitive. However, unless we ask questions in these areas in an honest and straightforward way then we won't fully understand the activities that young people do. This means opportunities to prevent problems will be lost. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer.

If you agree to take part, we would like you to complete the very short questionnaire in this information pack. **Please return it with the consent form (the yellow form)**. There will then be a follow-up survey, which you can complete online, over the telephone or we can send you a paper copy. Your participation in the parent survey is completely voluntary. The survey asks questions about:

- your child's health and growth until now
- your family's health and lifestyle
- your child's personality
- your child's diet

We would also like to look at your child's NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) results. If you agree, we will ask the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) to provide your child's results to us.

There will also be a brief questionnaire for **your child's teacher**, which asks about:

- how your child gets on in the classroom and how your child is doing with school work

#### OPTIONAL CONSENT

##### ***Do I have to consent to everything?***

You can decide whether you want your child to do all parts of the study or only some.

- You can decide whether we can store some of your child's saliva for use in future research related to puberty.
- You can decide whether we can look at your child's NAPLAN results.

#### **5. How will the research team stay in touch with us?**

This project will look at how life changes for you and your child over time. So it is important that we collect information this year and as your child grows older. Therefore, we want to stay in touch with you even if you move or your child changes schools. To help us do so, we will ask for contact information. This will include a current address, telephone number and an email address. We will like to have that information on two other members of your family or friends. If you move, we may try and contact you, your child's school or your family member or friend to check your new address and phone number.



**Patron  
Chairman  
Director  
Ambassador**

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We may also contact you to let you know about new studies. These would be studies done by people in the CATS research team. This would only be to give you more information about the study. You do not have to take part in any of these studies.

#### **6. What are our alternatives to taking part in this project?**

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do not want your child to take part, they do not have to take part. If you decide they can take part and later change your mind, then you can stop them taking part at any time. You do not have to tell us why. If you decide to take your child out of the study, we would like to keep the information that has been collected. If you do not want us to do this, you must tell us at the time you withdraw your child from the research project.

#### **7. What are the possible benefits?**

Your child will be given a small gift each time they help in the study. This is a great opportunity to be part of a study run by leading researchers at a world-class institution. It is a chance to help make a better life for the next generation of young Australians.

#### **8. What are the possible risks?**

We don't think there are any risks for you or your child in taking part in this study. You and your child can skip any questions you don't want to answer. Some children may feel uncomfortable having their height and weight measured. For that reason all measures will be done in private by a staff member from the Centre for Adolescent Health. Children will only be asked to remove shoes, coats and heavy jumpers. All staff from the Centre have had to pass police checks and get a Working with Children card. If you or your child become upset after taking part in this study you can call Lisa Mundy on (03) 9345 7978. Or you can talk to a doctor with whom you feel comfortable.

#### **9. Will we disturb the school?**

We will collect information from your child during school hours. We will make sure we do not cause any major disruption of classes. We will ask you to complete a questionnaire but you can do this at a time that works for you.

#### **10. How do we keep the information confidential?**

Any information we collect that could possibly identify you or your child will be kept confidential. We won't pass any of this information on to anyone else except with your permission.

Only the following people may access information collected as part of this research project:

- Select members of the research team involved with this project
- The Royal Children's Hospital Human Research Ethics Committee

We will remove all names and contact information from the study data. When we write or talk about this project, we will do so in such a way that no child or parent can be identified. Your child's data will have only a special code number. Only the managers in the research team can match your child's name to your code number, if it is necessary to do so. All electronic information will be password-protected and all paper-based information will be stored in locked cabinets. If you consent for a sample of your child's saliva to be stored, the sample will be kept at the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute. In accordance with Australian laws, you have the right to access information we collect about you. Please contact us if you would like to access your information.

#### **11. Will I be informed of the results when the research project is finished?**

We will send you a summary of the overall project results. The summary will be for all participants, not you or your child's individual results. We will also provide some feedback to your child's school on how its students compare with others across Victoria.

#### **If you would like more information about the project please contact:**

Name: Lisa Mundy (Project Manager)

Telephone: (03) 9345 7978

#### **If you have any worries about the project and would like to speak to someone not in the research team, please contact:**

Director, Ethics & Research, The Royal Children's Hospital

Telephone: (03) 9345 5044



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