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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Creation and validation of the New Australian Eating Survey (AES26) for assessing dietary intake in the Australian population: a pilot study

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You're invited to participate in the research study to validate the new Australian Eating Survey (AES26) food frequency questionnaire for assessing dietary intake in the Australian population. This research is being conducted by the research team from the University of Newcastle and the Hunter Medical Research Institute Nutrition and Metabolic Health Program.

Why is the research being done?

We are developing and evaluating a new food frequency questionnaire, the Australian Eating Survey 2026 (AES26). Food frequency questionnaires help researchers understand what people usually eat, so they need to be accurate and up to date. Recent updates to national nutrition data provide new information about what Australians eat. Using these updated data, we have created the AES26.

This study will evaluate how consistently AES26 measures usual dietary intake and how well it compares with established methods such as 24hour dietary recalls and weighed food records. The findings will determine whether AES26 is suitable for use in future nutrition and health research.

Who can participate in the research?

You are eligible to participate if you:

- Are an adult (≥18 years).
- Can read and understand English sufficiently to provide consent and complete questionnaires and food diaries
- Can attend three in-person appointments at the University of Newcastle (Callaghan campus) over six months
- Have access to the internet and a computer, smartphone or tablet

Please note that this study is not suitable for you if you:

- Are pregnant, planning pregnancy, or breastfeeding.
- Have conditions that affect body weight, metabolism, appetite, or dietary intake (e.g. asthma, thyroid disease, diabetes requiring insulin, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, coeliac disease, eating disorder, cancer, follow a vegan diet, have a clinically significant food allergy/intolerance).
- Are taking medications associated with weight change, (e.g. long-term steroids; GLP-1 agonists).
- Smoke or vape.
- Have unstable medication regimen in the previous three months.
- Have used fake tan in the past week or cannot avoid it.
- Cannot commit to three in-person assessments at the University of Newcastle (Callaghan Campus).

What would you be asked to do?

This study includes three data collection timepoints (baseline (phase 1), 3 months (phase 2) and 6 months (phase 3)).

If you are interested in participating, at each timepoint, you will be asked to complete online questionnaires, attend one in-person appointment (each phase, three in total), and attend dietary reference measurements.
Before you begin, however, you will need to complete a brief online eligibility questionnaire to ensure this study is suitable for you, and if deemed eligible, complete an online consent form prior to commencing the study.

Outline of study activities

Activity	**When**	**Approx time to complete**	**What it involves**
Online questionnaires	Baseline, 3 months	70 minutes	Health, medical, lifestyle, physical activity, wellbeing and demographic questionnaire, AES26, original AES®
Online questionnaires	6 months	45 minutes	Short health & medical, physical activity, and feasibility & acceptability questionnaire, AES26.
In-person appointment	Baseline, 3 months, 6 months (three in total)	90 minutes	Height, weight, body composition (if safe, more information below), resting energy expenditure, skin carotenoids, blood pressure, finger-prick blood sample.
Dietary reference methods	1-2 weeks after each appointment	90 minutes for each 3-day weighed food record, and 30 minutes for each 24-hour dietary recall.	3-day weighed food record + three 24-hour dietary recalls using the application Easy Diet Diary®.
Approximate total time to complete study activities		13.5 hours	

- Before each in-person appointment you will be required to fast for 10 hours (water allowed) and avoid vigorous exercise and alcohol for 24 hours. After each in-person appointment, you will be offered a complimentary light breakfast before leaving.
- Each in-person appointment will be scheduled on a mutually suitable time/day, usually between 7.00- 11.30am.
- The fingerstick blood sample (1-2 drops, ≈50µl) will measure your lipids (e.g. cholesterol) and glucose levels.
- The test to measure resting energy expenditure measures how much energy your body uses by analysing oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide production, while you lay comfortably.
- Participants with artificial electrical implants such as a defibrillator or pacemaker will not have their body composition measured via the bioimpedance machine, for safety reasons.
- Participants will receive an email with instructions to register and complete the original AES® food frequency questionnaire through the Australian Eating Survey platform.
- For the 3-day weighed food record, you will need to record everything you eat and drink for 3 days (2 weekdays and 1 weekend day) using the free mobile app Easy Diet Diary®. You will also complete three 24-hour online dietary recalls (2 weekdays and 1 weekend day) using the same app (Easy Diet Diary®), at each timepoint. For this purpose, you will need to download the app Easy Diet Diary® and create an account following our instructions.

- Equipment (e.g. kitchen scales, measuring cups) and instructions for recording your food and drink consumption at home will be provided. Equipment will be returned via a prepaid postage satchels that we will provide.

What choice do you have?

Taking part in this study is entirely your choice. Only people who provide written consent can participate. Your decision will not disadvantage you or your relationship with the University of Newcastle or HMRI. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time. Data already collected will be retained unless you explicitly ask the research team to delete it by emailing them at AES26-nutritionstudy@newcastle.edu.au. De-identified data that has already been included in publications cannot be removed.

What are the risks of participating?

The research team is taking measures to minimise risks, however, a few potential risks are associated with participating in this study. The collection of a small amount of blood via fingerpick (approximately 1-2 drops) might cause brief discomfort or bruising, and in rare cases, a person may feel faint or dizzy.

Participants with insulin-treated diabetes are not eligible. If you have diabetes that is not treated with insulin you can take part, however, you may be at risk of experiencing low blood sugar levels (hypos) while fasting. To minimise this risk, participants with diabetes will receive information on how to monitor for hypos and manage them before their appointment. Additionally, the research team will remain vigilant and are trained to manage rare hypoglycaemia events during fasting.

In the event that a participant experiences psychological distress, our research team will offer referrals to support services. These services include:

- The University of Newcastle counselling service, Phone (02) 4921 6622, Email counselling@newcastle.edu.au. You can find them at at Level 2 (ground level) of the Student Services building (across from Bar on the Hill).
- Beyond Blue Phone (1300 22 4636) or Lifeline 13 11 14
- Further information and resources regarding mental health and wellbeing, you can visit the Black Dog Institute website at www.blackdoginstitute.org.au.

What are the benefits of participating?

Participants who complete the study will receive a copy of their results including blood pressure, blood glucose level, lipid levels (e.g. cholesterol), resting energy expenditure, and body composition (e.g. lean muscle mass).

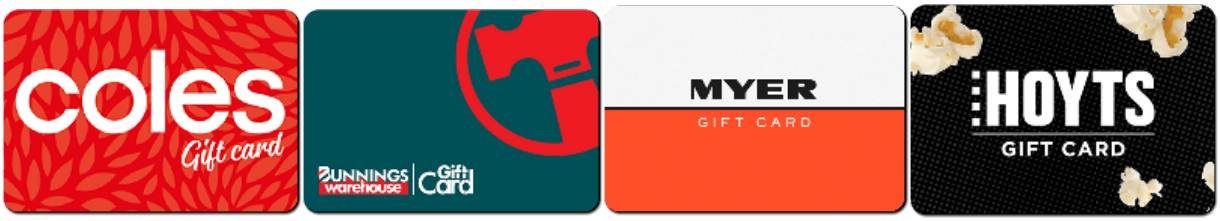
In addition, you can also optionally consent to your GP receiving a letter containing any abnormal blood pressure or blood test results. For blood pressure measurements, the GP will be informed if the values are high or elevated and there is another comorbidity such abnormal lipids or glucose.

You will also receive access to food intake feedback reports from the Australian Eating Survey® which will contain your estimated daily energy intake, fat, protein and carbohydrate intake, and vitamin and mineral intake. The research dietitians will briefly explain these reports to you at the end of the study to help you interpret the feedback.

Moreover, a lay summary of the overall research findings will be available and is expected to be ready by mid to late next year. If you would like to receive a summary of the study findings, you may contact the research team via AES26-nutritionstudy@newcastle.edu.au to be notified when it becomes available.

As a gesture of appreciation for the inconvenience, participants who complete the study will also receive **eGift cards to a total value of $200**. The eGift cards will be provided in increments; $60 eGift card after completing phase one (tasks include: online questionnaires, in-person appointment, food records (3-day weighed food record + three 24-hour dietary recalls), and returning borrowed

items), another $60 eGift card after completing phase two (same tasks as phase one), and $80 eGift card after completing phase three (same tasks as phases one and two).The eGift cards can be chosen from a range of Australian retailers, such as those below.



Will participating in this study cost anything?

There is no cost to you for taking part in this study. All study procedures are provided free of charge. In addition, free parking will be provided in a designated parking space next to the building by providing your car number plate to research staff prior to the appointment.

How will your privacy be protected?

The online questionnaire has been developed using the secure online survey platform, REDCap, hosted on HMRI servers which are physically and virtually secured. The REDCap privacy policy is available at https://projectredcap.org/software/mobile-app/privacypolicy/. All data will be deidentified by replacing names with numerical codes when downloaded from REDCap or other platforms

Regarding data collected through the Easy Diet Diary® app, the company Xyris can only access a user's data with the user's explicit permission. Xyris manages personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and its own Privacy Policy, which describes how data may be collected, stored, used, or de-identified. No identifiable participant data will be shared externally through the app, and all information entered into the system will be handled securely in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles. The Xyris Privacy Policy is publicly available on the company's website. Easy Diet Diary legal information can be found here.

All data will be immediately deleted after it has been transferred to the research team. Data of this study will be stored using a password-protected University of Newcastle electronic storage system. Only members of the research team have access to the data, except as required by law. Data will be retained securely for a minimum period of five years from completion of the project. De-identified data may be retained indefinitely for research and quality assurance. Information will be managed and stored in accordance with the University's Research Data and Materials Management Guideline (https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=72) or any successor Guideline, and other applicable University of Newcastle policy provisions.

Data quality checks

To help ensure the quality and integrity of the data collected, the baseline online questionnaire includes routine checks commonly used in research to confirm that responses are genuine. These checks do not identify you. The questionnaire system (REDCap) also generates an encrypted, non-identifiable code based on your device's internet connection to help detect repeated submissions from the same source. This code cannot be linked back to you or your actual IP address. These checks are used only to protect data quality. Data quality checks will be conducted on all survey responses. eGift cards will only be provided if the submitted data meets the quality standards.

How will the information collected be used by the research team?

The results of the study will be reported and disseminated via national and international conferences, peer-reviewed publications, and reports to relevant funding bodies. Individual participants will not be named or identified in any reports arising from the study. Non-identifiable data may also be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny and to contribute to further research and public

knowledge, or as required by law. Additionally, the data will be used to create and validate the new Australia Eating Survey-2026 version food frequency questionnaire. If validated, it will be commercialised for use by other researchers and clinicians.

What do you need to do to participate?

Please make sure you understand the above information before agreeing to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, please contact the researchers via email AES26-nutritionstudy@newcastle.edu.au.

Eligible participants who would like to take part in the study then need to complete the consent form, then proceed with the first baseline questionnaire.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Laureate Professor Clare Collins
Chief Investigator

Funding: This project is funded by G1501501 which is the staff support account (University of Newcastle) for L/Prof Clare Collins. These funds have been accumulated over the past 7 years due to the sale of the Australian Eating Survey® to various research groups around the country.

Conflict of interest disclosure: L/Prof Collins is the inventor of the online Australian Eating Survey® Food Frequency Questionnaire. It is sold commercially to other researchers but for this project the fee will be waived.

Ethics: This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. [H-2026-0041].

Complaints about this research

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Services, NIER Precinct, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au and quote reference number [H-2026-0041].