



University of California, San Francisco
Northwestern University

MASALA PULSE

The Official Newsletter of the MASALA Study
<http://www.masalastudy.org>

HELLO! From the MASALA Study Researchers

Dear MASALA participants:

We have some wonderful news to share with you! Our study has received a new grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to bring our 1,150 participants back for another clinical exam focusing on heart function. We have also received another new grant to expand MASALA, recruiting another 1,150 Bangladeshi and Pakistani participants into the study from Chicago and New York City, increasing our total MASALA study to 2,300 participants! MASALA is the only longitudinal study of South Asians in the United States. Having a larger number of participants from three geographic locations (SF Bay Area, Chicago, and New York City) who we can follow over time is so important to understand the health of South Asians. The goal of MASALA is to understand why South Asians develop more diabetes and heart disease and how we can prevent these chronic diseases.

Starting this Fall we will be contacting participants at UCSF and Northwestern to come back for the clinical exam visit. This visit will take 3-4 hours, and we will help you with your transportation and timing to make it as convenient as possible. We will conduct some **new tests to check your heart and blood vessel function**. As always, we will be doing some fasting blood tests. The new tests include an echocardiogram (ultrasound) of your heart, and blood vessel stiffness measurements in your arm, leg, and your fingertips. We will also ask you to walk at your normal pace for 6 minutes to test your heart and lung function. We will send the results of your blood tests and echocardiogram to you so you can share with your doctor. We will give you \$50 cash or gift card as a token of our appreciation for your time and effort to come for this visit.

Thank you for your support and long-term participation in our MASALA Study!

Warm wishes,

Alka Kanaya and Namratha Kandula



We hope that you will join us at one of our **Town Halls by zoom** this summer to learn more details about these new study plans. We would like to hear from you, discuss any questions, and get your feedback. Please try to join one of these Town Halls.

Sunday, August 8: 6pm Pacific or 8pm Central

Thursday, August 26: 6pm PT or 8pm CT

Saturday, September 11: 9am PT or 11am CT

Please register using this link:

<https://bit.ly/363Wmh3>



MASALA²G

Update on H.R. 3131

South Asian Heart Health Awareness and Research Act of 2020

MASALA 2nd generation study (MASALA-2G) begins at Northwestern University this summer!

Young adulthood is an important time to lower heart disease risk, especially for South Asians.

The **MASALA-2G** (2nd generation) study will identify factors that contribute to heart health in young adult South Asian Americans who are children of MASALA participants from the Chicago field center for MASALA.

If you have a daughter or son aged 21-40 years who may be interested in participating, please email our team at MASALA2G@northwestern.edu or call **312-503-5470** with their name, age, and contact information.

Enrollment will begin in Chicago in summer 2021, with plans to expand to the San Francisco study site soon! The MASALA-2G study is led by Dr. Nilay Shah, Assistant Professor of Cardiology at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Did you know that data from the MASALA study was used to generate support for the bipartisan South Asian Heart Health Awareness and Research Act?

This Bill, introduced by Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC), would create heart health promotion grants at the Centers for Disease Control and National Institutes of Health to conduct cardiovascular disease research, develop culturally appropriate materials to promote heart health, support community groups involved in heart health promotion, and support conferences and workshops on research design to include South Asian communities disproportionately affected by heart disease.

Currently, the South Asian Heart Health Bill is being reintroduced in the House of Representatives where hopefully it will be passed and then move to the Senate for approval in September 2021. Thanks to participants like you, we can continue to raise awareness regarding the alarming rate of heart disease in the South Asian community and invest in ways to reverse this trend.

You can track the bill here: <https://bit.ly/3djixDN>



- **Please call us if you have a major change in your health status, a new address, or a new phone number**, if you were recently in the hospital, or if you underwent a serious outpatient medical test, or have any new diagnoses.

- **Please take part in our phone interviews.** If we don't reach you and we leave a message,

please call us back. We need to update your information each year

- We sometimes send you forms asking you to give MASALA permission to collect your medical records from hospitals and doctors' offices. **Please return these forms quickly**, so we will be able to get records MASALA needs for its research.

To contact the UCSF clinic, call 415-236-2725

To contact the Northwestern clinic, call 312-841-1967

For study news, events, and publications:



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www.masalastudy.org

Support Us:

We gratefully accept donations to support our work. To donate, visit our study website at www.masalastudy.org and click on the "Support Us" link at the bottom of the "About the Study" page.

COVID-19 Research and Q & A

MASALA was one of 14 U.S. cohort studies that joined the [Collaborative Cohort of Cohorts for COVID-19 Research \(C4R\)](#) to study how COVID has affected our communities. Thanks to the 460 MASALA participants who completed the COVID questionnaire by email or phone this Spring. So far, over 43,000 people have completed this COVID survey across the United States (only 1,033 (2%) were Asians, including our MASALA participants).

These are the preliminary results:

- ◆ Across C4R, 8% of participants have reported having COVID, but this varied by ethnic group: highest was among Native American participants (22%), followed by Hispanic/Latinos (9%), compared to 6% of Whites and 5% of Black participants.
- ◆ About 3.5% of MASALA study respondents report having had COVID, and most have had mild cases not requiring hospitalization.
- ◆ We are testing dried blood spot samples in our lab now. Of the 100 MASALA participants who have completed these blood samples so far, 98% have antibodies against COVID, which can be due to vaccines and/or prior infection.

We are analyzing the data from these COVID surveys for all C4R participants to understand what pre-existing conditions may have been related to those who had more severe COVID and what factors may have been protective. We will analyze the antibody results to help to understand which factors are linked to having high antibody levels against COVID after infection and/or vaccination.



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How can I tell if the antibodies detected on the blood test were from a prior COVID infection or from the vaccine?

A: Our lab tests for antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 virus spike (S) and nucleocapsid (N) proteins in the blood. The S protein antibody can come from previous infection or from the vaccine. The N protein antibody only comes from previous infection. The result that we get from the lab is the total (S+N) antibody detected above a threshold. The FDA has not approved this test for individual antibody results to S and N proteins. So, we cannot tell whether the presence of antibody is from prior infection or vaccine.

Q: Does having antibodies to COVID mean that I am immune to catching SARS-CoV-2 virus in the future?

A: Antibody results do not give a full picture of immunity. For these and other reasons, the antibody results should not modify behavior or be used to define “immunity” to SARS-CoV-2.

Q: How long will my antibodies against COVID last?

A: This is a question that many scientists are working on now. We will need long-term data from studies like MASALA to understand how long antibody levels remain detectable after infection or vaccine, and how antibody levels might be related to past, present, and future health.

Q: Can I still participate in this COVID study?

A: Yes! In October 2021, we will ask all MASALA Study participants to complete the short COVID survey again, even if you did not complete the survey the first time. Please check your email or please call us if you would like to complete this questionnaire by phone with our research staff.

Fitness In Our Daily Lives

We have learned a lot about the importance of fitness and how it can impact our health and wellbeing. Many studies show that participating in fitness related activities for about 150 minutes per week can benefit you in many ways including:

- ◆ strengthening your bones and muscles
- ◆ reduce risk for chronic diseases (type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and many types of cancers)
- ◆ improve brain health
- ◆ boost your mood and self-confidence
- ◆ help manage weight
- ◆ decrease the risk of falls and injury
- ◆ reduce insomnia for better sleep

Maintaining a regular fitness schedule can be difficult. The best way to incorporate physical activity into your daily life is by doing activities you enjoy with the people you care about. Exercising with a partner or in a group creates a sense of accountability and can motivate you to work harder as well. This could mean going on a daily family walk or meeting up with some friends for a Bollywood dance class!



Chair Yoga

An activity to get you moving that doesn't require leaving your house is chair yoga. It can be done from your desk when you take a break from work or when you're watching TV. All you need is a chair to stabilize you while getting comfortable with these exercises and as you progress, you can do them while standing as well.



Upward Salute: Start seated comfortably on a chair with your legs shoulder width apart and hands by your side. As you inhale, bring your arms straight up above your head, and bring them back down slowly as you exhale.

Forward Bend: Sit comfortably towards the front of the chair, slowly bend your torso forward, over your legs, keeping your hands on your thighs at your side. Return to the seated position and use your arms to support yourself as you move.

Spinal Twist: Start seated comfortably on the chair and cross your hands over your chest, then turn your torso slowly in one direction as far as you can go without discomfort and then return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side and stabilize yourself by holding the chair if necessary.



Reverse Arm Hold: Sit comfortably so that there is space between your back and the back of the chair. Reach your arms outwards into a T shape, and then behind your lower to mid back. Alternate between these two positions for 30 seconds and then rest.



We look forward to seeing you soon for your next Clinical Visit!