Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form

Interventional Study - *Adult providing own consent*

	Alfred Health
Title	Investigating the immunomodulatory and clinical effects of fermentable fibre intervention to reduce symptoms of Long COVID
Short Title	Evaluating fermentable fibre as a Long COVID therapy
Project ID Number	146/24
Project Sponsor	Monash University
Coordinating Principal Investigator	Dr Jane Varney
Associate Investigator(s)	Dr Paul Gill, Dr Arwel Jones, A/Prof Jane Muir, Prof Menno van Zelm, Prof Anne Holland
Location	Monash University (Central Clinical School, Alfred Centre) / Alfred Health

Part 1 What does my participation involve?

1 Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project. This is because you have Long COVID. The research project is testing the effects of a diet high in dietary fibre on symptoms of Long COVID.

This Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form tells you about the research project. It explains the tests and treatments involved. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research.

Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether or not to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative, friend or your local doctor.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. You will receive the best possible care whether or not you take part.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to sign the consent section. By signing it you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Consent to take part in the research project
- Consent to have the tests and treatments that are described
- Consent to the use of your personal and health information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

2 What is the purpose of this research?

Long COVID has become a new health condition that causes many symptoms such as tiredness (fatigue), immune system problems and brain fog. New research has shown that diet could be a potential treatment for the symptoms of Long COVID. This may be by changing the balance of bacteria in the gut, that could affect other parts of the body.

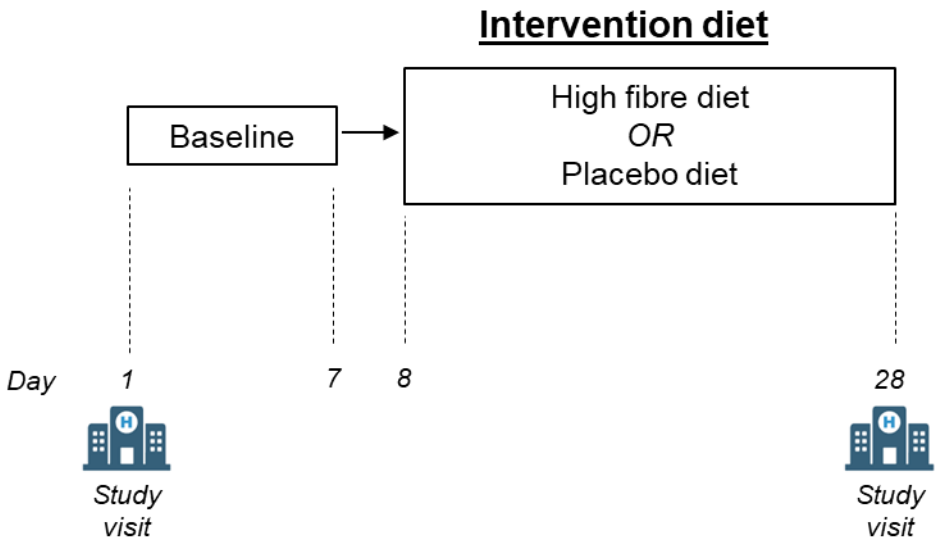
We have shown in previous research projects that people who consume a diet high in fibre may change the gut bacteria and also the immune system in a way that could help to treat the symptoms of Long COVID.

This research project intends to find out if it is possible to use a diet high in fibre to treat symptoms of Long COVID.

It will also help to understand how a high-fibre diet works to reduce symptoms. This may be through changing parts of the immune system or the balance of bacteria in the gut. This will provide the preliminary results needed to fund a larger project. The larger project will confirm if this diet could be used a standard treatment for people with Long COVID.

3 What does participation in this research involve?

Your participation will involve 2 visits over a period of 4 weeks (28 days). The details of this participation are provided below and also shown in the diagram below.



Baseline study visit (Week 1, Day 1)

At your first visit you will be asked to confirm taking part in this study. If you do agree to take part in the study you will be asked to sign a consent form. The first visit will take approximately 30-60 minutes at Monash University (Level 4 Alfred Centre, next to Alfred Hospital) where you will be asked to complete all of the following:

- Provide information about you, including age, medication and Long COVID symptoms
- Consent for collection
- Provide a blood sample (50 ml, around 3 tablespoons) from a vein in your arm
- Given instruction on how to complete an electronic food diary
- Given instruction on how to collect stool (i.e. faecal or poo) samples

These instructions will be provided in a study booklet that you will take to help guide you through the rest of the study.

Baseline week (Week 1)

During the baseline week you will complete an electronic food diary using an online application on 3 separate days. You will record all foods and drink you consume. You will also complete a one-page gastrointestinal symptom questionnaire. These will be used to measure what your normal diet looks like and how your gut responds to this.

At the baseline visit we will provide you with 2 sets of 2 stool collection tubes (i.e. 4 in total). You will be asked to collect a stool sample into 2 of these tubes during the baseline week. You will be provided with equipment to store these samples and return them at the second study visit at the end of the intervention diet.

Intervention diet (Week 2-4)

During the baseline visit you will also be provided with a bag of frozen food items that will make up the intervention diet. This will be for a total of 3 weeks (21 days). Each day during the intervention diet period you will be asked to eat 2 of these items. The study booklet will contain instructions for how to reheat these items. You will also indicate in the study booklet whether you have eaten the food items or not. These diets will be either; 1) high fibre diet, or, 2) diet containing no extra fibre (i.e. placebo diet). You will be randomly given one of these diets but you will not be told what the diet is until after you have completed the diet. The results are compared to see if one is better.

During the intervention diet you will also complete food diaries and gut symptom questionnaires on 6 different days. We compare this to the baseline period to see how you responded to the intervention diet. You will also be asked to collect a stool sample into the 2 remaining stool collection tubes at the end of the intervention diet (day 20 or 21).

End of intervention diet study visit (Week 4, day 28)

On the final day of the intervention period you will again visit the research team at Monash University (Level 4 Alfred Centre, next to Alfred Hospital) where you will be asked to complete all of the following:

- Provide information about your Long COVID symptoms
- Provide a blood sample (50 ml, around 3 tablespoons) from a vein in your arm
- Return the 4 stool collection tubes
- Return the study booklet

4 What do I have to do?

If you have a local doctor, you may wish to inform them of your participation in this research project.

We do ask that you do not participate in another research study at the same time as this one without talking to us (research team) first.

During the intervention diet, we ask you to try to maintain your normal diet as much as possible.

You can take all your regular medications and receive other routine health care as usual during the research.

5 Other relevant information about the research project

We plan that 40 participants will take part in this project, with 20 being allocated to each of group.

6 Do I have to take part in this research project?

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information and Consent Form to sign and you will be given a copy to keep. Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your routine treatment, your relationship with those treating you or your relationship with Alfred Health.

7 What are the alternatives to participation?

The intervention diet being offered in this study may be consumed as part of your routine health care. You are still able to access your existing therapy outside of taking part in the study. If you don't decide to take part, you can continue with your usual medical care, without any alterations.

8 What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, participation may help you to improve your consumption of dietary fibre which has many health benefits. These benefits may include improved bowl function. Participation in this study will more broadly help us to understand the best treatments for Long COVID that are not already being used.

9 What are the possible risks and disadvantages of taking part?

Possible risks and discomforts with consuming dietary fibre include minor gastrointestinal discomfort if you do not normally consume a lot of dietary fibre. In order to minimise the chance of this happening, we have designed the intervention diet to slowly increase the amount of fibre you will eat at the beginning of the diet.

Having a blood sample taken may cause some discomfort or bruising. Sometimes, the blood vessel may swell, or blood may clot in the blood vessel. Some people may feel faint when having blood taken, and may occasionally faint. Rarely, there could be bleeding or a minor infection. If this happens, it can be easily treated.

The project does involve the inconvenience of 2 study visits to the Alfred Hospital at baseline and at the end of the intervention period. The research team will hope to organise all visits around a day and time that suits you best including coinciding them with any others visits (appointments outside of the research project) to the Alfred hospital.

10 What will happen to my test samples?

Your consent will be sought for the testing of your samples for this project. Blood samples will be processed and analysed at the research laboratory of Prof van Zelm at Monash University. We will measure levels of proteins (antibodies) and white blood cells produced by the immune system. Stool (faecal) samples will be stored at the lab at the Department of Gastroenterology at Monash University. They will be used to measure levels of compounds that may be produced by the gut bacteria that could be influencing the immune system and Long COVID symptoms. These stool samples will also be used to profile the gut bacteria to see how it may change in response to the diet. Each sample will be assigned an identity code specific to the donor. The key to this code will be kept by the researchers on a secure database at Monash University. Extended consent will also be sought for the use of your stored blood samples and stool samples for future research projects. This is an optional component and if you decline it has no bearing on your involvement in the current project. When extended consent is given, the blood

samples and stool samples will be stored indefinitely as the frozen samples remain very stable. Ethics approval will be sought for use of your stored samples in any future projects. The samples will be destroyed when they are no longer able to be used, if your consent is withdrawn, or at the end of this project if you have given consent for this current project only.

11 What if new information arises during this research project?

During the research project, new information about the risks and benefits of the project may become known to the researchers. If this occurs, you will be told about this new information.

It possible that some project results (for example, your immune system measurements) could inform your physician regarding decisions on your treatment, these will be communicated directly to you by your physician. You will be able to request your project results from your physician.

12 Can I have other treatments during this research project?

It is important to tell research team about any treatments or medications you may be taking, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins or herbal remedies or probiotics. You should also tell the research team about any changes to these during your participation in the research project. It will be explained to you at the baseline visit which of these treatments need to be avoided for the time you are involved in the research project.

13 What if I withdraw from this research project?

If you decide to withdraw from the project, please notify a member of the research team when you withdraw. This notice will allow that person or the research supervisor to discuss any health risks or special requirements linked to withdrawing. If you do withdraw your consent during the research project, the research team will not collect additional personal information from you, although personal information already collected will be retained to ensure that the results of the research project can be measured properly and to comply with law. You should be aware that data collected by the research team up to the time you withdraw will form part of the research project results. If you do not want them to do this, you must tell them before you join the research project.

14 Could this research project be stopped unexpectedly?

During the research project, new information about the risks and benefits of the project may become known to the researchers. These may include reasons such as unacceptable side effects of the diet. If this occurs, you will be told about this new information. This new information may mean that you can no longer participate in this research. If this occurs, the person(s) supervising the research will stop your participation. In all cases, you will be offered all available care to suit your needs and medical condition.

15 What happens when the research project ends?

When the project is finished, you will be informed of the project findings by mail or email if you decide you want to receive them. The findings will be shared as brief overall summary of the findings.

Part 2 How is the research project being conducted?

16 What will happen to information about me?

By signing the consent form you consent to the research team collecting and using personal information about you for the research project. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential and be securely stored. Your

information will only be used for the purpose of this research project and it will only be disclosed with your permission. Your information will only be used for the purpose of this research project and it will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law.

All information that is collected from you during the research project will be stored against a code so that you cannot be identified. This code will be kept in a locked cupboard at Monash University, which can be accessed only by the research team. Other paper records will be stored against the code and kept in a separate locked filing cabinet at the Monash University. All electronic data will be stored together on a computer against a unique code so that data collected from participants can be analysed together. All electronic data will be stored on secure Monash University servers and be protected by password access. Study records will be kept indefinitely.

Information about you may be obtained from your health records held at Alfred Health and other health services for the purpose of this research. By signing the consent form you agree to the study team accessing health records if they are relevant to your participation in this research project. Your health records and any information obtained during the research project are subject to inspection (for the purpose of verifying the procedures and the data) by the relevant authorities and authorised representatives of the Sponsor, to this Participant Information Sheet, Monash University, or as required by law. By signing the Consent Form, you authorise release of, or access to, this confidential information to the relevant study personnel and regulatory authorities as noted above.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your permission. Only group data, not individual results, will be published. Information about your participation in this research project may be recorded in your health records. In accordance with relevant Australian and/or Victorian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to request access to your information collected and stored by the research team. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please contact the research team member named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

17 What if I get injured or suffer complications in the research?

If you suffer any injuries or complications as a result of this research project, you should contact the research team as soon as possible and you will be assisted with arranging appropriate medical treatment.

18 Who is organising and funding the research?

This research project is being conducted by researchers at Alfred Health and Monash University and led by Dr Jane Varney. No member of the research team will receive a personal financial benefit from your involvement in this research project (other than their ordinary wages).

19 Who has reviewed the research project?

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Alfred Hospital Ethics Committee, Melbourne.

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

20 Further information and who to contact

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query.

If you want any further information concerning this project or if you have any medical problems which may be related to your involvement in the project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the following:

Coordinating Principal Investigator: Dr Jane Varney
Telephone: (03) 9903 0615
Email: jane.varney@monash.edu

You may also contact the following persons:

Clinical contact person

Name	Jade Melville
Position	Senior Clinician Physiotherapist
Telephone	03 90763450
Email	ja.melville@alfred.org.au

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about being a research participant in general, then you may contact:

Reviewing HREC Office/Complaints contact person

Position	Complaints Officer, Office of Ethics & Research Governance, Alfred Health
Telephone	(03) 9076 3619
Email	research@alfred.org.au

You will need to quote the following project number: 146/24 and the name of the researcher given in section 20.

Consent Form - *Adult providing own consent*

Title	Investigating the immunomodulatory and clinical effects of fermentable fibre intervention to reduce symptoms of Long COVID
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Protocol Number	146/24
Project Sponsor	Monash University
Coordinating Principal Investigator	Dr Jane Varney
Associate Investigator(s)	Dr Paul Gill, Dr Arwel Jones, A/Prof Jane Muir, Prof Menno van Zelm, Prof Anne Holland
Location	Alfred Health / Monash University (Central Clinical School, Alfred Centre)

Consent Agreement

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet or someone has read it to me in a language that I understand.
- I understand the purposes, procedures and risks of the research described in the project.
- I give permission for my doctors, other health professionals, hospitals or laboratories outside this hospital to release information to Monash University concerning my disease and treatment for the purposes of this project. I understand that such information will remain confidential.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.
- I freely agree to participate in this research project as described and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study without affecting my future health care.
- I consent to the storage and use of blood and stool samples taken from me for use, as described in the relevant section of the Participant Information Sheet, for this specific research project.
- I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

Extended Consent (use and storage of tissue for future research)

- I consent to the storage and use of blood and stool samples taken from me for use, as described in the relevant section of the Participant Information Sheet, for:
  - Any future research that relates to measuring changes in the immune system associated with Long COVID
  - Any future research associated with Long COVID that relates to measuring changes in stool microbiota and related compounds

  YES ☐ NO ☐

Declaration by Participant – for participants who have read the information

Name of Participant (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Declaration by Senior Researcher†

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Name of Study Senior Researcher†
(please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

† A senior member of the research team must provide the explanation of, and information concerning, the research project. Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.

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Form for Withdrawal of Participation - *Adult providing own consent*

Title	Investigating the immunomodulatory and clinical effects of fermentable fibre intervention to reduce symptoms of Long COVID
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Declaration by Participant

I wish to withdraw from participation in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal will not affect my routine treatment, my relationship with those treating me or my relationship with Alfred Health

Name of Participant (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

In the event that the participant's decision to withdraw is communicated verbally, the Senior Researcher will need to provide a description of the circumstances below.

Declaration by Senior Researcher†

I have given a verbal explanation of the implications of withdrawal from the research project and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Name of Senior Researcher†
(please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

† A senior member of the research team must provide the explanation of and information concerning withdrawal from the research project.

Note: All parties signing the consent section must date their own signature.