

## What is direct to consumer genetic testing actually worth?

It's a situation many have faced before or will in the future: last month, I was up early waiting for a call and a medical update. Unfortunately, the news wasn't great: a doctor said I had an elevated risk—around two to three times higher than the average person—of developing late-onset Alzheimer's disease.

On the bright side, this news was complicated.

My regular physician or local hospital didn't deliver the diagnosis. Instead, a doctor from Turkey contacted me on Skype to go through a detailed analysis of my DNA. Because of some family history with early onset Alzheimer's and an interest in what's becoming an emerging field, I sought out some direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing within the last six months. Turns out that these days, it takes nothing more than some money and a mailed spit sample to get a routine DNA exam; a brief glimpse at fate is then conveniently sent to your inbox.

The conclusion these DTC genetics companies draw, if you dig down into the data enough, comes with a number of subtle caveats and complicating factors. While it's true I have a somewhat increased risk for Alzheimer's, I already knew that I should eat healthily and exercise regularly. To some extent, my genetic fate was sealed from the moment I was conceived—I can't change the fact that I have that pesky allele. Yet, there still seems to be an overwhelming likelihood that I won't develop Alzheimer's according to these test odds and the uncertainty behind them. Why bother at all with DTC genetics?

**Read the full, original story:** [I had my DNA analyzed, and all I got was this lousy story](#)

### **Additional Resources:**

- [Disease tracking direct-to-consumer genome sequencing breaks \\$1000 barrier \(\\$695\)](#), Genetic Literacy Project
- [The \\$1000 human genome: A reality check](#), Genetic Literacy Project