

# The Framingham Heart Study

A Project of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and Boston University

Dear FHS Participant:

The Framingham Heart Study at Boston University and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) are writing to inform you of an incident involving your personal information related to your participation in the Framingham Heart Study. NHLBI, a component of the National Institutes of Health, is the federal agency that directs the Framingham Heart Study, and Boston University is an NIH contractor that operates the Framingham Heart Study.

The incident involved a security vulnerability that resulted in an unauthorized party accessing study information on the Framingham Heart Study's server system, which included your personal information. At this time, we do not have any knowledge that your personal information has been used for any unauthorized purpose. We are sending you this letter so that you can understand more about this incident, how we are addressing it, and additional steps you can take to further protect your privacy.

## *What Happened*

On September 8, 2024, the Framingham Heart Study became aware of unusual activity on a computer server used by the study and began actively investigating this incident. We isolated the server to prevent further unauthorized activity and applied patches to the protected server environment to address the vulnerability. However, cyber-attackers were able to access the protected server environment and download files containing unencrypted study information before the system could be secured. This unencrypted information included your personal information.

## *What Information Was Involved*

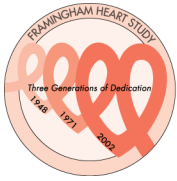
Based on our investigation, your personal information was involved in the files accessed in this incident, which may include your name, address, date of birth, telephone number, email address, sex, race, ethnicity, self-reported broad income and occupational categories, signature, and medical information. **Your Social Security number was not involved in this incident.** However, the files did contain some study participants' Social Security numbers and we have notified these individuals of such.

## *What We Are Doing*

The Framingham Heart Study at Boston University and NHLBI are actively investigating the incident and have notified the appropriate law enforcement agencies. Boston University launched a forensic investigation and, as noted above, has taken steps to ensure this type of security incident does not happen again. In addition, we will be hosting an online meeting to discuss any concerns you may have. We will provide you with those details in the coming days.

## *What Can You Do*

At this time, we are not aware of any reports of identity fraud or improper use of information as a direct result of this incident. However, we encourage you to remain vigilant and promptly report any suspicious activity to the proper law enforcement authorities.



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You may also take advantage of the free annual credit report available from each credit reporting agency by visiting [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). You have the right to obtain such a free report annually, from each of the three major credit reporting bureaus. If you detect any unauthorized or suspicious activity in any of your accounts, contact the issuing company immediately. If you are victim of identity theft—meaning that your personal identifying information was used to pose as you, harass you, or obtain identification containing your personal information or anything else of value—you have the right to file your own police report and obtain a copy of that report. If you find that your information is being used without your authorization, contact your local police department.

The Framingham Heart Study, Boston University, NHLBI take your privacy and information security very seriously. We are taking steps to prevent any similar events in the future, including working with law enforcement as necessary, and will provide you with updates as needed.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation for your years of voluntary participation in the Framingham Heart Study. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please call **1-888-458-9812**.

Sincerely,

Drs. Joanne Murabito and George O'Connor

MPIs, Framingham Heart Study Center  
Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine