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PATIENT INFORMATION ON CERVICAL SCREENING

What it is

Cervical screening helps prevent cervical cancer. It is not a test for cancer itself. It looks for high-risk HPV, the virus that causes nearly all cervical cancers. If HPV is found, the same sample is checked for cell changes that might need follow-up or treatment.

If you have had your invitation, please try to book

Cervical screening helps prevent cervical cancer. Even if you feel well, it is worth attending when invited.

Who it is for

In England, cervical screening is for women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 64. The first invitation is usually sent from age 24 and a half, so screening can begin from age 25. If you have a cervix but are registered as male, you may not be invited automatically, but you are still entitled to screening and can arrange this through the practice.

How often it is done

Most people aged 25 to 64 are invited for cervical screening every 5 years. Some people are invited sooner, for example if HPV is found, if a result is unclear, or if follow-up is needed after a previous result. Since 1 July 2025, many people aged 25 to 49 who test negative for HPV at a routine screen move to a 5-year recall interval, but not everyone in this age group will do so straight away.

Why it matters

Cervical screening helps find people at higher risk before cancer develops. Taking part is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of cervical cancer.

About HPV

HPV is very common. Most people will have it at some point, and in most cases it clears on its own. Having HPV does not mean you have cancer. It means the sample may need closer checking or you may be invited back sooner.

What happens at the appointment

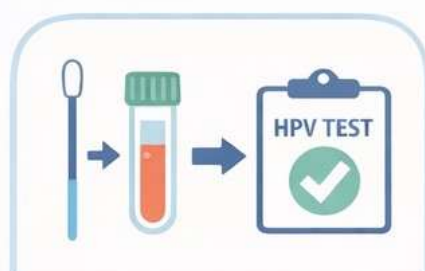
The appointment is usually quick. The nurse or doctor will explain what is happening and answer any questions. A speculum is gently inserted into the vagina so the cervix can be seen. A small soft brush is then used to take a sample from the cervix. The speculum is removed afterwards and you can get dressed in private.



1. The nurse or doctor will, explain the test and help you feel comfortable.



2. A clear plastic speculum helps the clinician see the cervix



3. A tiny soft brush collects a small sample of cells for testing

Will it hurt?

Many people find cervical screening uncomfortable, but it should not be unbearable. You can ask to pause or stop at any time. You can also ask for a smaller speculum, extra time, or more support if you feel anxious.

Things that may help

It may help to:

- book a longer appointment if you are anxious
- ask for a female sample taker
- tell us in advance if you have had pain, trauma, sexual assault, vaginismus, or a difficult previous experience
- ask for reasonable adjustments if you need them

We will do our best to make the appointment as comfortable as possible. National guidance supports giving people time, privacy, clear explanation, and adjustments where needed.

When is best to book?

Try to book when you are not having your period. If you are pregnant, routine screening is usually delayed and is not normally done until at least 12 weeks after birth.

Your results

Your results are usually sent through the NHS App or by letter. The nurse or doctor will usually tell you when to expect them. If they take longer than expected, this does not usually mean anything is wrong. Sometimes the sample cannot be tested properly, and you may be asked to come back for a repeat test. This does not mean anything serious has been found.

You may still need screening if

You may still need cervical screening if you:

- have had the HPV vaccine
- are not currently sexually active but have been in the past
- have sex with women
- are a trans man or non-binary person with a cervix
- have had a partial hysterectomy and still have a cervix

If you have a cervix, screening may still be important for you.

Cervical screening is not for symptoms

Cervical screening is for people without symptoms. A normal screening result does not rule out cancer or other problems if you develop symptoms later. If you have symptoms, please contact the practice rather than waiting for screening.

When to contact the practice

Please contact us if you have symptoms such as:

- unusual vaginal bleeding
- bleeding after sex
- bleeding between periods
- pain or discomfort during sex
- unusual vaginal discharge
- ongoing pelvic pain

If you have symptoms, do not wait for your next cervical screening appointment.

Prefer to watch instead?

If you would rather see what happens before you book, you can watch our cervical screening video on the CHG website.

When to book screening and when to contact the practice



Book routine screening when invited

If you have had your invitation, please book your cervical screening appointment.



Ask for adjustments if needed

Tell us if you feel anxious, have had a difficult previous test, or would like extra support.



Contact the practice if you have symptoms

Do not wait for screening if you have bleeding after sex, *bleeding between periods*, unusual discharge, or ongoing *pelvic pain*.

Booking at CHG

If you have had your invitation and are due for cervical screening, please book your appointment. You can call reception or use the CHG online contact form. You can also visit our website to read this leaflet and watch our cervical screening video.

If you are unable to use the online form, reception can help.

Further reading

NHS: Cervical screening

<https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/cervical-screening/>

NHS: How to book cervical screening

<https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/cervical-screening/how-to-book/>

NHS: Your cervical screening results

<https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/cervical-screening/your-results/>

The Eve Appeal: HPV and cervical screening

<https://eveappeal.org.uk/>

Further information and contacting us

CHG cervical screening information and **video** available at:

<https://cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk/services/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have further questions:

Fill out a **triage form** on our **website**: www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk

Call the **practice** on 01285 653184 or 01285 653122

If you require **urgent** medical advice, call 111 (24 Hrs)

In an **emergency** call **999**