

Most smear test results are normal. Please try not to worry if you are called back for another test. Even a result that is not normal is unlikely to mean you have cancer. It may be due to an infection or minor cell changes that are not a cause for concern.

If your result is not normal, you may need to have another free smear test or a more detailed examination of the cervix using a type of microscope. This test is called a colposcopy. If there are cell changes on your cervix, they can be easily treated to prevent them developing into cancer cells.

The CervicalCheck register

The CervicalCheck register is a secure electronic database that contains your name, address, date of birth and Personal Public Service Number (PPS No.).

The register also records your smear test results and any related procedures that you might have had.

Be assured that your information is secure. To maintain confidentiality, you will be given a unique identification number by the CervicalCheck register. You can make sure you are on the register by calling CervicalCheck on Freephone 1800 45 45 55 or checking online at www.cervicalcheck.ie. To keep the register up to date, please let us know if there is any change to your personal details such as name or address.

The Health (Provision of Information) Act 1997 allows CervicalCheck to get your name, address and date of birth so that we can invite you for regular free smear tests.

How will CervicalCheck use my information?

We will use your contact details to:

- invite you for a free CervicalCheck smear when your test is due, and
- advise you if any further treatment is needed.

Your smear test sample may be used for research, teaching and review to ensure continued high quality tests.

About cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is a cancer of the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb). Cervical cancer is the second most common female cancer in Europe. Cervical cells change slowly and take many years to develop into cancer cells, making cervical cancer a preventable disease.

How can I reduce my risk of getting cervical cancer?

- Have a regular smear test to pick up any early problems.
- Stop smoking.
- Visit your doctor if you have any concerns or symptoms such as irregular vaginal bleeding, spotting or discharge.



CervicalCheck is part of the National Cancer Screening Service.



About your free smear test



Cervical screening saves lives.



What is CervicalCheck?

CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme is a Government-funded service that provides free smear tests to women aged 25 to 60.

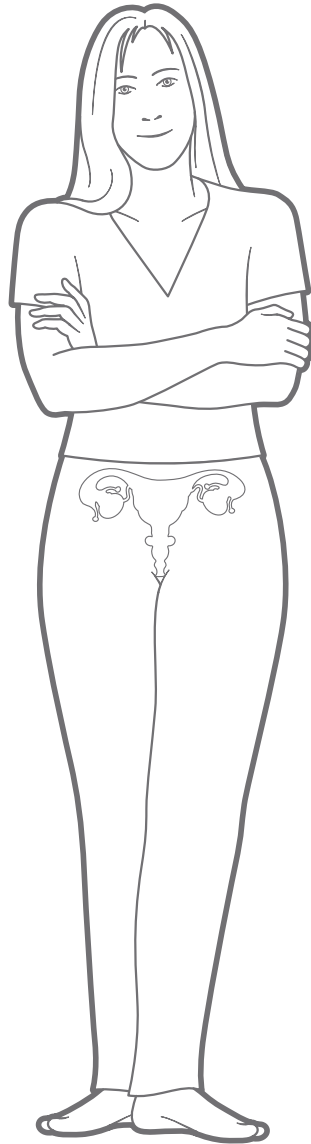
What is cervical screening?

Cervical screening tests women for changes in the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb) using a smear test.

What is a smear test?

A smear test (sometimes called a pap test) is used for cervical screening. It is a simple procedure where a smearer (doctor or nurse) takes a sample of cells from the cervix (neck of the womb) to look for early changes. A smear test can identify cell changes before they become cancer cells. If these cells are not found and treated, they could become cancerous.

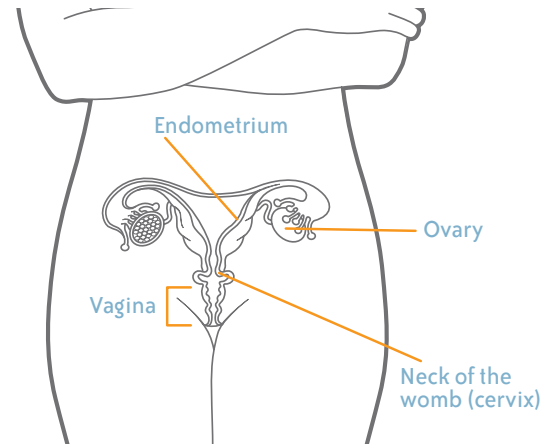
Sometimes cells in the cervix can change due to an infection caused by certain types of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). HPV is a common viral infection usually spread by sexual contact. Most adults will



have it at some time in their lives. HPV infections have no symptoms and normally clear up on their own. Some HPV infections can cause cell changes in the cervix. If the infection does not clear up on its own, there is a greater risk of developing cervical cancer.

A smear test can detect early cell changes to the cervix. The earlier the cell changes are found, the easier they are to treat.

As with all screening tests, cervical screening may not always be 100% accurate. There is a small risk that cell changes will not be picked up in a smear test. However, any cell changes will usually be picked up in future smear tests. This is why it is important to have smear tests regularly.



This diagram gives a general view of the reproductive system. It is not exact.

Who should have a smear test?

Most women aged between 25 and 60 should have regular smear tests. If you are not sure if you need a smear test, ask your doctor or nurse.

Why should I have this test?

Quite simply, having a regular smear test could save your life.

When is the best time to have a smear test?

The best time to attend for your smear test is mid-cycle - that is, 10 to 14 days after the first day of your period (if you are having periods).

Where can I have a smear test?

You can choose to have a free smear test from any smearer (doctor or nurse) registered with CervicalCheck. For example:

- general practitioners (GPs) and practice nurses,
- family planning clinics, and
- Well Woman Clinics or women's health clinics.

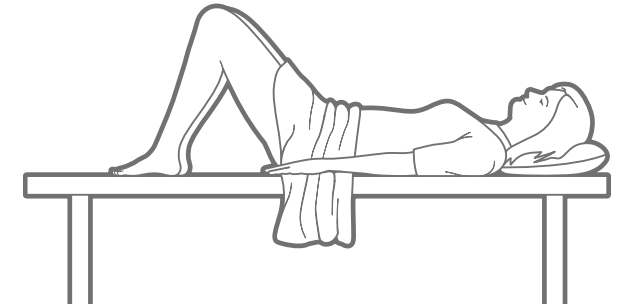
For details of registered smearers, contact CervicalCheck on Freephone 1800 45 45 55 or visit www.cervicalcheck.ie. Please have your Personal Public Service Number (PPS No.) with you when you go to have your smear test.

How is a smear test taken?

A smear test is a very simple procedure that takes less than five minutes. It may be slightly uncomfortable but should not be painful.



You may lie on your side or on your back for your smear test. The doctor or nurse taking the test will gently insert an instrument called a speculum into your vagina to hold it open. The cervix is the area where the top of the vagina



leads to the uterus (womb). The doctor or nurse will use a small, specialised brush to gently remove a sample of cells from the cervix. This sample is sent to the laboratory to be checked.

What if I've had a hysterectomy?

If you have had a hysterectomy (your womb removed), check with your doctor to see if you need to continue having regular smear tests.

How often should I have a smear test?

After the first smear test, women aged 25 to 44 will be invited by CervicalCheck to have a free smear test every three years. We will invite women aged 45 to 60 to have a free smear test every five years. CervicalCheck will advise you when your next free smear test is due. If you have any unusual or irregular vaginal bleeding, spotting or discharge, do not wait for your next smear test – contact your doctor immediately.

Results

CervicalCheck will send you a letter about your results within four weeks of your smear test. The result of your test will also be available from your smearer.