

What is a cervical biopsy?

A cervical biopsy is the removal of a small sample of tissue from the cervix for examination under a microscope so that the cells can be assessed more accurately.

What if I need treatment?

If there are cell changes on your cervix, they can be easily treated to prevent them later developing into cancer cells. Treatment can usually be carried out under local anaesthetic in the clinic where you had the colposcopy. Your doctor at the clinic will advise you of your choices.

What your smear test results mean

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 your results mean

A smear test can pick up changes in the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb). A smear test can identify cell changes before they become cancer. The earlier the cell changes are found, the easier they are to treat.

Most smear test results are found to be normal. Please try not to worry if you are called back for another test. The result could be due to an infection or minor cell changes that may or may not need treatment.

Results that are not normal

Low grade or high grade changes may be detected by your smear test. Low grade changes are more likely to return to normal by themselves. High grade changes are unlikely to get better by themselves and may require treatment before returning to normal. If you have any questions about your result, contact your smearer (the doctor or nurse who took your test).

When is the best time to have a repeat smear test?

If you are advised to have a repeat smear test, the best time to attend is mid-cycle, that is, 10 to 14 days after the first day of your period (if you are having periods). This repeat test is free. It is best not to have sex in the 24 hours before your smear test.

The possible results of your test	What this result means	What you should do next
No abnormality detected	The cervical cells appear to be normal.	If aged 25 to 44, have your next free smear test in three years. If aged 45 to 60, have your next free smear test in five years.
Unsatisfactory or inadequate	This means that the laboratory could not read your smear test clearly.	Have a free repeat smear test in three months to check the cells again.
Result is not normal There are different grades of change <i>(see middle column)</i>	Low grade changes This means the test has found some minor changes in the cells of the cervix. These will often return to normal on their own. This does not mean that you have cancer. High grade changes These changes in the cells are less likely to return to normal, on their own and need to be checked. This does not mean that you have cancer.	Have a free repeat smear test in six months to check the cells again. If the changes persist, your smearer may send you for another test called a colposcopy. You will be referred for another test called a colposcopy. Some women with these changes may need to have a simple outpatient treatment.

What is a colposcopy?

Depending on your results, you may need to have a more detailed examination of the cervix. This is called a colposcopy. A colposcopy is a simple examination that is carried out the same way as a smear test. A doctor or nurse will look at the cervix using a type of microscope called a colposcope. During the examination a liquid or dye may be applied to the cervix to help identify any changes to the cells. A colposcopy can be done safely during pregnancy.

Why do I need a colposcopy?

You have been advised to have a colposcopy examination because your cervical smear test showed signs of changes in the cells of your cervix (the neck of the womb). These may be pre-cancerous cell changes, which means they give early warning that cervical cancer might develop later if the cells are left untreated. The colposcopy examination allows the doctor or nurse to decide if you need treatment.