



NHS Cervical Screening Programme

HPV self-testing

A self-test to help protect against cervical cancer



About HPV self-testing

The NHS offers some women and people with a cervix HPV self-testing as an alternative check for a virus called human papillomavirus – also known as HPV.

HPV is a common virus and usually harmless, but some high-risk types can increase your chance of developing cervical cancer. You can do the HPV self-test yourself, in private.

Why you've been invited

You were invited for cervical screening (previously known as a smear test) but did not attend. HPV self-testing gives you another option to take part.

You can do the test:

- in your home or in a private space
- at a time that suits you
- without needing an appointment.

The instructions in the kit will tell you how to do the test. If you need any extra help – for example, if you have a physical or learning disability – support is available. You'll find contact details in your self-test invitation.

What the difference is between cervical screening and HPV self-testing

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

We don't yet have the evidence to show that switching to HPV self-testing is as effective at preventing cervical cancer as regularly attending cervical screening. But if you haven't been screened, self-testing is the next best option.

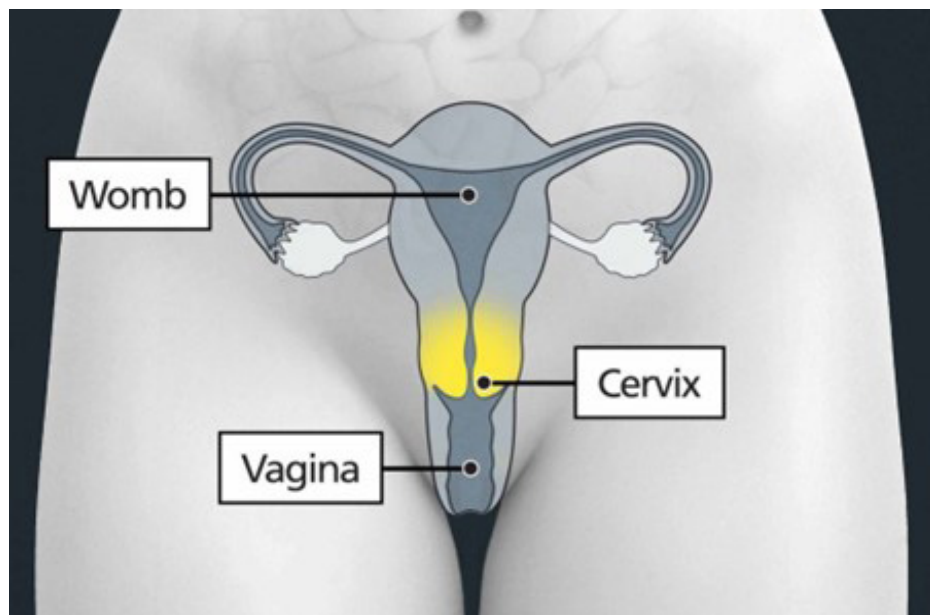
Cervical screening

- Takes place at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic.
- A nurse or doctor takes a small sample from your cervix.
- The sample is checked for high-risk HPV.
- If high-risk HPV is found, the sample is then checked for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer.
- These changes can be treated.

HPV self-testing

- You take your own sample at home or in a private space.
- The test involves inserting a swab (a bit like a cotton bud) a few centimetres into your vagina to collect a sample. There are full instructions in the kit.
- You then post the sample back to the NHS, where it is checked for high-risk HPV.

- If high-risk HPV is found, you'll be asked to book a cervical screening appointment at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic.
- A nurse or doctor will take a small sample from your cervix that can be checked for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer.
- These changes can be treated.



A diagram showing the position of the cervix and vagina

How to get the self-testing kit

The NHS will invite you to take part in HPV self-testing. Your invite could come through the NHS App, a text message (SMS), an email or a letter.

Once you've got your invite, follow the instructions to order your free kit in the NHS App or through your NHS online account. If you don't have an account, you can create one. Your invitation also includes information about other ways to order a kit.

How to get your results

After you take your sample, post it back straight away in the envelope provided. Postage is free.

You should get your results within 14 days in the NHS App or by letter.

What the results will tell you

HPV negative

Your test did not find high-risk HPV. You'll be invited for cervical screening again in 5 years, if you are still eligible.

You could still get HPV in the future, so it's important to know the symptoms of cervical cancer. The NHS website explains them: www.nhs.uk/cervical-cancer-symptoms.

HPV positive

Your test did find high-risk HPV. This does not mean you have cervical cancer. You'll be asked to book a cervical screening appointment at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic. A sample will be taken to check for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer.

Find out more about HPV at www.nhs.uk/about-hpv.

HPV result not clear

If we were not able to get a clear result from your HPV self-test, you may be asked to do it again. This is nothing to worry about and does not mean you have cancer.

What to do if you don't want to do an HPV self-test

You can still book a cervical screening appointment any time – even if you were invited for cervical screening months or years ago.

If your routine cervical screening is due on or after your 60th birthday and you do not attend, you will receive confirmation that you will no longer receive routine invitations. You may receive an invitation to request an HPV self-testing kit.

Find out more at www.nhs.uk/cervicalscreening.

If you've had the HPV vaccine

The vaccine doesn't protect against all HPV types. Even if you've had the HPV vaccine, you should still go for cervical screening appointments or, if invited, take an HPV self-test.

If you are under 25 and missed your HPV vaccine when you were 12 or 13, contact your GP surgery to get vaccinated.

How we use your information

We use your NHS records to invite you at the right time and to improve the screening programme.

Read more about how we use and protect your information at www.gov.uk/screening-data.

Read more about opting out of NHS Screening Programmes at www.gov.uk/screening-opt-out.

Alternative versions

This information is available in other languages and easy read format:

- call 0300 311 22 33
- email england.contactus@nhs.net

Please give us your reference number when you call or email.
You can find it in your invitation.

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