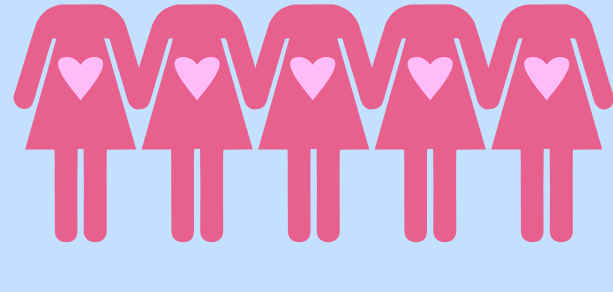


Cervical Cancer Screening

We recently asked some patients for feedback on our cervical screening service. Here's some helpful information and answers to your questions.



Prefer an easy-read? [Click here!](#)
Need a different language? [Click here!](#)

What is cervical screening

Cervical screening (also known as a smear test) is a test which helps prevent cancer. It is for people who **do not have any symptoms** of cervical cancer.

The test checks for Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection, which is very common and usually harmless. Most types of HPV will clear up by themselves before you even know you have it.

Some types of HPV can lead to changes in the cells of your cervix, which can develop into cancer if not treated. Cervical screening helps us spot these cell changes early, so we can treat them before cancer develops.



Every year, around 5000 lives are saved by cervical screening

Who should come?

25- 64-year-olds every 5 years

You will get your first invitation around 6 months before your 25th birthday. Your invite will come through the NHS App or will be sent as a text or letter. You will be invited **every 5 years** until the age of 64. If any of your screenings show you have HPV, you will be invited more often to monitor any cell changes.

Those who are transgender, non-binary and registered with their GP as male will not be automatically invited for cervical screening but should still attend screening if they have a cervix. Contact your GP, sexual health clinic or transgender health clinic and ask to receive automatic invitations. See the NHS guide to screening for trans and nonbinary people [here](#).

If you have any symptoms of cervical cancer, please **don't wait for your next screening appointment - contact your GP immediately**. Find out more about cervical cancer symptoms [here](#).



Every year, around 28,000 women and people with a cervix in Oxford attend cervical screening, and 87% have a normal result.

How to book

Once you receive your invite, contact your GP practice to book an appointment. If it's been more than 5 years since your last smear, or you've never had one (and you're over 25), don't wait to be invited – book now!

You can request a cervical screening appointment using the online form or by calling **01865 778244** and talking to our virtual assistant.

Link to our online form: <https://florey.accrux.com/p/K84031>

Or you may receive a text from us with a direct booking link.



Tips for booking

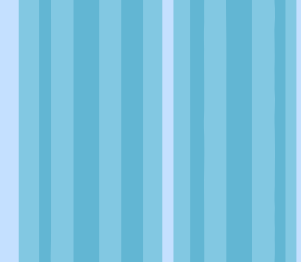
- People often choose to have their appointment at the start of the day, but it is up to you. We sometimes have clinics on [Saturdays](#).
- All our nurses at smear appointments are [female](#).
- If you are anxious, you can ask for a [double appointment](#) so you can have more time before your screening to ask questions. You can also book an appointment to [just discuss cervical screening](#) with the nurse, with no pressure to do the test.
- Don't book your appointment when you're on [your period](#), as you are more likely to receive an inconclusive result.
- [Don't use creams, lubricants or medication](#) in your vagina in the two days before your test, as these can affect your results.

What happens during the appointment



When you arrive at the practice, please check in using the screen or at reception. Take a seat in the waiting room and wait for the nurse to call you into her room. **All our nurses are female**. You can **bring a friend or family member** with you or ask for a chaperone from the practice.

The nurse will explain the test and answer any questions you have.



You will be asked to undress behind a curtain from the waist down and lie back on a bed. She will give you a sheet to cover yourself, or if you are wearing a skirt or dress, you can keep this on. You may feel awkward, but please try to remember the nurse has done hundreds of these exact procedures and is focused entirely on your health, not judging your body.



The nurse will ask you to bring your feet up towards your bottom and let your knees fall to the sides. If you are uncomfortable, please tell the nurse, and she may ask you to try a different position.



She will gently put a smooth, tube-shaped tool called a speculum into your vagina. She may use some lubricant. There are different sizes of speculums. If you are uncomfortable, ask the nurse to try a different size.

She will gently open the speculum to widen the vaginal walls and use a small, soft brush to take a sample of cells from your cervix. It will probably feel a bit strange, but it shouldn't be painful. **You can ask to stop at any time**.

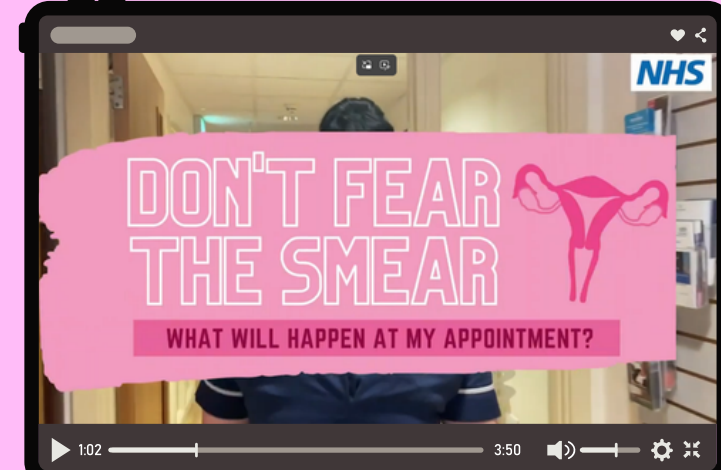


The speculum will then be removed, and you can get dressed in private. And that's it! The whole test should take **less than 5 minutes**.

Your results will be sent to you in the NHS App or by letter. They should arrive within around **4 weeks**.

This video explains what happens during your cervical screening appointment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyIRMjuT0k8>



What if...

...I'm embarrassed

Being embarrassed is totally normal. Remember, our nurses do this every single day. They have seen hundreds of vulvas and cervixes of all different shapes, colours, and sizes. **Cervical screening is one of the best ways to prevent cervical cancer.**

...I'm pregnant?

If you are pregnant, we ask that you wait until 3 months after your baby is born.



...I've had the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine has been offered to all girls aged 11-13 since 2008 and is usually delivered in school. While having the vaccine does decrease your risk of cervical cancer, it does not protect against all types of HPV that cause cervical cancer. **You should still attend cervical screening if you have had the HPV vaccine.**

...I'm a virgin?

You can still get cervical screening if you are a virgin. HPV is transmitted via any form of sexual contact, including sexual touch, oral, vaginal and anal sex, and sharing sex toys. If you have never had any form of sexual contact, you are at lower risk of cervical cancer; however, there are also other risk factors for developing cervical cancer, such as family history and smoking. **Everyone should go for a cervical screening test if they can, no matter their sexual history.**

Some people believe cervical screening takes away your virginity. Virginity is about intimate and sexual experiences, while cervical screening is a health check.

... I'm worried about my result

It's completely understandable to be worried about your results, but not knowing doesn't make a potential issue disappear. We are here to support you, whatever your result.

87% do not need further tests (HPV negative)

9% are invited for screening again in 1 year (HPV positive and no abnormal cells)



4% are referred for a colposcopy (HPV positive and abnormal cells)

Most people have an HPV negative result. You'll be invited for screening again in 5 years. Sometimes the result is unclear. You'll be asked to come back in 3 months to have the test again.

An unclear result isn't anything to be worried about; it just needs to be repeated.

If your sample is HPV positive, you will also be told if any cell changes were found. If there are no abnormal cell changes, you'll be invited for screening in 1 year and again 1 year later if you still have HPV.

If you still have HPV after 2 years, you'll be asked to have a colposcopy.

If there are abnormal cell changes, you will be asked to have a colposcopy. A colposcopy is a different type of test where a microscope is used to look at your cervix. Find out more about colposcopies on the NHS website.

...I have more important things than screening to think about

Life gets busy, and before you know it, that appointment you meant to book has slipped down the to-do list. We all do it! But cervical screening is an important health check. Please make your health a priority.



...I've had a hysterectomy?

If you have had a total hysterectomy, you do not need a smear test. Some hysterectomies are partial, meaning the cervix is not removed. Those who have had a partial hysterectomy should still have a cervical screening. If you are unsure what type of hysterectomy you had, please contact us.

...I've had a bad experience in the past

We're sorry to hear that you've had a bad experience. Every nurse is different, and you can request a longer appointment. Explain to the nurse that you've had a bad experience so they can help you, and hopefully, this time will be much better.

Further support

Find out more about cervical screening on the [NHS website](#).

You can contact us with any questions about cervical screening, invitations, results or symptoms. Use our [online form](#) or call us on 01865 778244 to make an appointment.

Ask Eve is a free, confidential helpline run by trained nurses. You can call them on 0808 802 0019 or email nurse@eveappeal.org.uk. Find more information about [Ask Eve here](#).

