

Protect yourself: understanding cervical screening



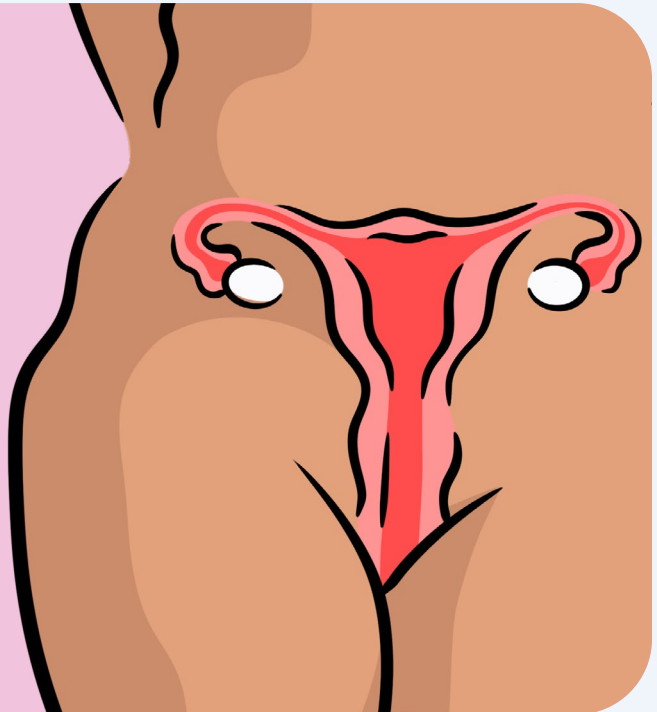
What is cervical screening?

Cervical screening is a free health test available on the NHS. It helps prevent cervical cancer by checking for a virus called high-risk HPV and, if this is present, cervical cell changes. It is not a test to diagnose cervical cancer.

Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by high-risk HPV.

**5,000
lives
saved**

Cervical screening is estimated to save 5,000 lives every year in England.



Who is eligible for cervical screening?



Cervical screening **starts at the age of 25** in the UK. Anyone with a cervix is eligible. This may include cis women, trans men, non-binary and intersex people.



You will be **invited up to six months before your 25th birthday**, and then every five years if you don't have high-risk HPV, until the age of 64. If you live in Northern Ireland, you will be invited every 3-5 years.



If you are trans and registered as male at your GP surgery, you can 'opt-in' to receive automatic invites. If you're eligible but haven't received an invite, you can contact your GP surgery or a specialist clinic to book your screening.

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Cervical screening didn't just save my life, it also saved my daughter's life as well. At only 23, she was aware enough to have her HPV vaccine before 25 and also have an anomaly checked out which led to her having a biopsy and investigations. Awareness is key, regardless of age, knowing the symptoms and knowing your body can save your life and give you peace of mind!

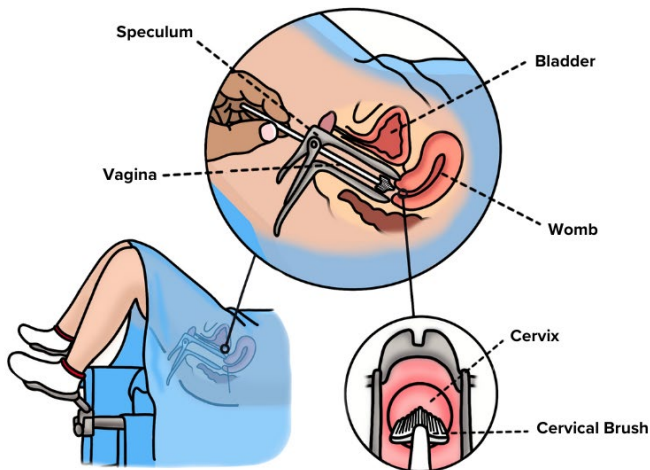
– Gayle, who was diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2019

What happens during cervical screening?

During cervical screening, a doctor or nurse will collect a sample of cells from the cervix. They will insert a lubricated speculum into the vagina to open up the vaginal walls. A sample of cells is taken by sweeping the cervix with a soft plastic brush. The sample will be sent off to a laboratory for testing.

The sample will be tested for high-risk HPV. This is the common virus that causes nearly all cervical cancers. If high-risk HPV is found, the sample will be checked for any changes to the cells. These cell changes aren't cancer, but could lead to cervical cancer in the future if not monitored or treated.

Your cervical screening results should arrive via the NHS App or by post. Most people will receive a normal result. If high-risk HPV and cell changes are found, you will be invited for further investigations.



Tips for cervical screening

We know many people find cervical screening difficult, for different reasons. If you are looking for ways to make cervical screening better for you, there are lots of things you can try:



- ☐ Ask for the first appointment of the day
- ☐ Ask for a double appointment
- ☐ Ask for a nurse or doctor of a particular gender
- ☐ Ask to take someone you trust with you
- ☐ Write down any questions
- ☐ Talk to your nurse or doctor about any concerns
- ☐ Wear a skirt or dress to feel more covered
- ☐ Ask for a smaller speculum or more lubricant to be used
- ☐ Ask to insert the speculum yourself
- ☐ Ask to lie in a different position
- ☐ If you are menopausal, ask your GP to prescribe vaginal oestrogen, which you can use before screening to make it more comfortable
- ☐ Book your screening at a specialist clinic

We have more detailed tips, as well as guides for survivors of sexual violence and trans and non-binary patients, at **[EveAppeal.org.uk/Screening](https://eveappeal.org.uk/Screening)**

For more information



You can visit our website for more information on cervical screening at [EveAppeal.org.uk/Screening](https://eveappeal.org.uk/Screening)



The Eve Appeal is the leading gynaecological cancer charity. To help save lives, we focus on preventing and improving the early diagnosis of womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal cancer.

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All information correct at time of publication. Sources available on request.

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