

# Having a smear test

An **easy guide** about a health test for women aged 25 to 64



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# The smear test

3



This booklet tells you about having a smear test.

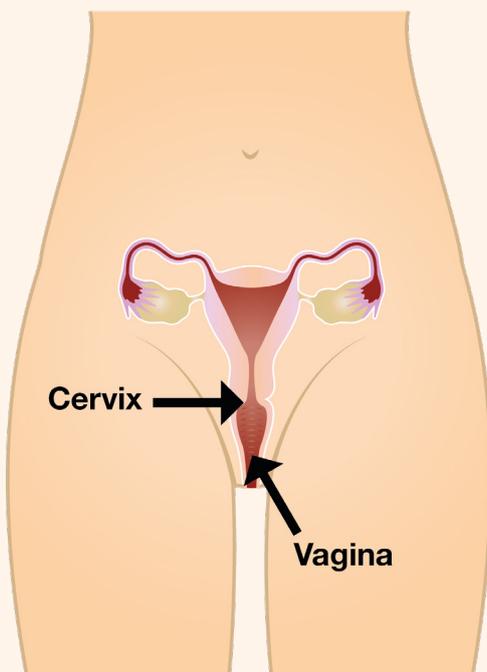
The test is also called cervical screening.



The test looks for changes in your cervix.

The cervix is inside your body at the top of your vagina. You cannot see it.

People use different words for their vagina such as private parts, front bottom or down below.



Cervical screening looks for a virus in the cervix.

For a very small number of women the virus can be serious and cause cervical cancer.

This is a cancer that starts in the cervix. It is a very serious illness that you can die from.



Having the test can stop you getting cancer.

Having the smear test saves thousands of lives every year.



If you are aged 25 to 49, the NHS will offer you the test every 3 years.



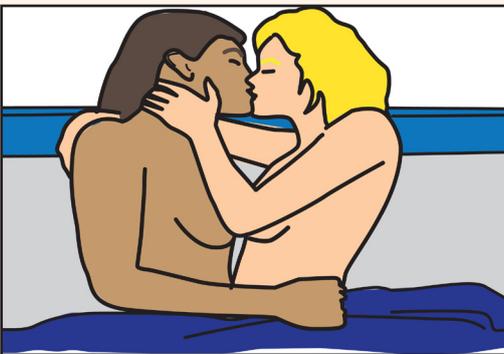
If you are aged 50 to 64, the NHS will offer you the test every 5 years.



The virus that can cause cervical cancer is called HPV.

Most women will get the virus at some time in their lives.

Most women who have the virus do not know they have it.



You can get the virus from any kind of sex or sexual touching with a man or a woman.



You can have the smear test even if you have never had sex.





Girls are offered an injection when they are **12** or **13**.

This injection can help protect girls against the virus that causes cervical cancer.

You may have had the injection when you were younger.



Having a smear test is important even if you had the injection when you were younger.

Having a smear test is the only way to find out if your cervix is healthy.



It is your choice to have a smear test or not.



### Good points

Screening can find the virus that causes cervical cancer.

Screening can find unhealthy cells.

We can remove unhealthy cells before they turn into cancer.



### Bad points

Sometimes screening can miss unhealthy cells.

Some women are sent for more tests and treatment they do not need.



You can talk to your family or carer.  
You can talk to a nurse or your doctor.

## Having the test



Your doctor will send you a letter asking if you want to book a smear test.



You should try to book a time and day when you are not having your period.



Do not use any creams on your vagina in the **2 days** before your test.



The smear test is usually done by a female nurse or doctor.

You can ask to make sure a female does your test when you book your appointment.



Wearing a skirt or dress can make the test easier.



You can take a female friend, carer or relative with you.

You can ask for a longer appointment.



You will go into a private room.

The nurse will check your name and age.

You can ask questions.



The nurse or doctor will ask you to take your knickers off.



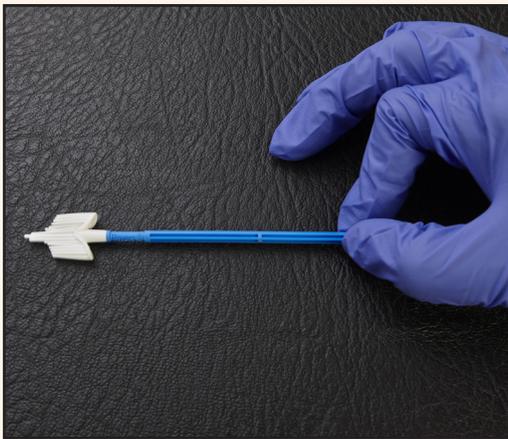
The nurse or doctor will ask you to lie on a bed with your knees bent.

They will ask you to open your legs.

You will have a paper sheet over you.



The nurse or doctor will use a speculum to put in your vagina so they can see your cervix.



They will then use a small brush to take a sample of cells from your cervix.

It should not be painful but it may be uncomfortable.

You can stop the test at any time.

**10**  
minutes

The test takes only a minute or two.

The whole appointment usually takes about 10 minutes.



Your sample is tested to look for the virus and any unhealthy cells.



You will get the result of your smear test in a letter or someone will telephone you.

**9 out of every 10 women** have a **normal result**.



This means your cervix is probably healthy.



**1 out of 10 women** might need to have **more tests**.

This means you may have unhealthy cells or the virus.



If you need to have more tests, your result letter will tell you what to do.

## Changes to look for



You should go to your doctor if you notice any of the following changes at any time.



Bleeding from your vagina when it is not your period.



Bleeding after your periods have stopped.



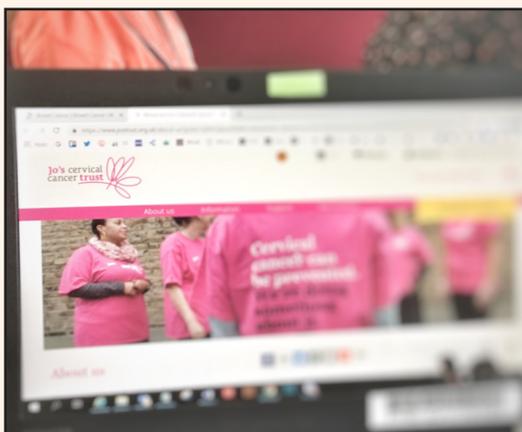
Pain or bleeding during or after having sex.



Any unusual fluids from your vagina.



You can telephone your doctor.



NHS.UK website:  
[www.nhs.uk/cervical](http://www.nhs.uk/cervical)

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust website:  
[www.jostrust.org.uk](http://www.jostrust.org.uk)



You can talk to your doctor or nurse.

You can talk to your family or carer.

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