

# NHS Cervical Screening Programme

## Cervical screening and human papillomavirus (HPV) testing

This leaflet tells you about HPV testing. This is a test carried out on the sample of cells we take during cervical screening. It makes no difference to what happens at your screening appointment.

Looking for HPV as the first test on screening samples is currently being introduced into the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. You may hear it being called 'HPV primary screening'. It helps us to more quickly identify who may need treatment, and who can simply be called back for screening in 3 or 5 years' time.

For information about going for screening, and about HPV, please read our leaflet 'NHS Cervical Screening: helping you decide' at:

[www.gov.uk/phe/cervical-screening-leaflet](http://www.gov.uk/phe/cervical-screening-leaflet)

More information is at [www.nhs.uk/cervical](http://www.nhs.uk/cervical)

### Why have I been sent this leaflet?

You live in an area where HPV primary screening is being used in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. This isn't happening everywhere in England yet.

### What is HPV?

HPV is a very common virus. Most women get it at some point in their lives. HPV can be easily passed on during sexual activity between partners. Some types of HPV can cause abnormal cells in the cervix.

### HPV primary screening

Once your cervical screening sample is sent to the laboratory, it will first be tested for HPV. If HPV is found, your sample will also be looked at for abnormal cells. Looking for abnormal cells is called 'cytology'. If you don't have HPV, then it is extremely unlikely that you will have any abnormal cervical cells.

Testing for HPV first should benefit women because:

- more abnormal cervical cells will be picked up
- women without HPV can be reassured that they are at extremely low risk of developing cervical cancer (although we cannot say 'no risk')
- the information we are gathering during the introduction of HPV primary screening will help us improve the screening programme

### Are all women offered HPV primary screening?

Not yet. In places where it isn't used yet, screening samples will either:

- not be HPV tested
- be HPV tested only after the sample has been checked for abnormal cells (cytology)

