

NHS cervical screening: information for trans and non-binary people

Cervical screening for trans people at a glance

- Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are registered with a GP as female do not need cervical screening as they do not have a cervix, but may still get invited.
- Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are registered with a GP as male do not need cervical screening as they do not have a cervix.
- Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who are registered with a GP as female are invited for cervical screening.
- Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who are registered with a GP as male can 'opt in' to receive routine cervical screening invitations by contacting their cervical screening provider, for example their GP or practice nurse, sexual health clinic or transgender health clinic.

Cervical screening

Cervical screening (also known as a smear test) is a free NHS test that is carried out at your GP surgery or at some sexual health clinics. The test looks for early changes in the cells of the cervix.

Cervical screening aims to prevent cancer from developing in the cervix (neck of the womb).

During the screening appointment, a small sample of cells will be taken from your cervix.

The sample is checked for certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV) that can cause changes to the cells of your cervix. These are called "high risk" types of HPV.

If these types of HPV are not found, your sample does not need any further tests and you will be recalled in five years' time.

If these types of HPV are found, the sample is checked for any changes in the cells of your cervix. These can be treated before they get a chance to turn into cervical cancer.

It is important to go for screening as finding changes before they become cancer gives you the best chance of successful treatment.

Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a very common virus – most people will be infected with it at some point in their life. It can be passed on through any type of sexual activity.

Screening will not prevent all cancers and not all cancers can be cured.

Taking part in cervical screening is your choice. You can find out more information from your GP or by visiting www.nhs.uk/cervical or www.gov.uk/cervical-screening-leaflet.

Cervical screening invitation process

We invite women and people who have opted in to receive invitations for cervical screening every 5 years from the age of 25 to 64. You may be invited more regularly if you have HPV. If you're 65 or older, you'll only be invited if a recent test was abnormal but you can request screening.

We send an invitation when the cervical screening test is due, asking you to make an appointment.

If you do not want to be invited for screening you should contact your GP. They will be able to remove you from the cervical screening invitation list.

It is important that you feel that you are treated with dignity and respect at all times. If you are worried about having cervical screening, talk to your doctor or practice nurse.

Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth

Registered with a GP as female

If you are aged 25 to 64 and registered with a GP as female, you will be routinely invited for cervical screening. We recommend that you consider having cervical screening if you have not had a total hysterectomy and still have a cervix.

Registered with a GP as male

If you are aged 25 to 64 and registered with a GP as male, you will not be automatically invited for cervical screening. However, if you have not had a total hysterectomy and still have a cervix, you should still consider having cervical screening. This is especially important if you have had any abnormal cervical screening results in the past.

If you want to 'opt in' to receive routine cervical screening invitations, you can contact a local cervical screening provider, for example your GP or practice nurse, sexual health clinic or transgender health clinic.

Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth

If you are a trans woman or non-binary person assigned male at birth, you will not need to be screened as you do not have a cervix.

Registered with a GP as female

If you are registered with a GP as female, you will be routinely invited for cervical screening unless your GP has already told us you're not eligible. We can update our records so you are not invited unnecessarily.

Registered with a GP as male

If you are registered with a GP as male, you will not be invited for cervical screening.

Cervical screening test

The nurse or doctor will put an instrument called a speculum into the vagina to help them see the cervix. They will then take a sample of cells with a soft brush.

If you are a trans man who has taken long-term testosterone, you may find screening uncomfortable or painful. You may want to talk to your doctor or nurse about using a different size speculum and some extra lubrication.

Cervical screening results

Your cervical screening results letter will explain if human papillomavirus (HPV) was found in your sample, what your result means, and what happens next.

Most people will not have HPV (an HPV negative result), which means your risk of getting cervical cancer is very low. You will be invited for screening again in 5 years.

Your results letter will explain what will happen next if HPV is found in your sample (an HPV positive result). You may need another cervical screening test in 1 year or a different test to look at your cervix (a colposcopy).

If you are worried about your risk of developing cervical cancer you may want to speak to your GP or practice nurse.

HPV self-testing

The NHS is introducing HPV self-testing for anyone with a cervix aged 30 to 65 who has not attended cervical screening following previous routine invitations. You can only use HPV self-testing if you have been invited.

If you have the NHS App, your invitation will be sent there first. If you are invited, you can order a free self-testing kit through the NHS App, your NHS online account or via the order telephone line.

You can do the test yourself:

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

The test involves inserting a swab a few centimetres into the vagina to collect a sample. Full instructions on how to take your sample are included with the kit.

Once you have taken your sample, return it using the pre-paid packaging provided. Your sample will be tested for high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV).

If high-risk HPV is not found, you will receive your next cervical screening invitation in 5 years.

If high-risk HPV is found, you will need a follow-up clinician-taken cervical screening test.

HPV self-testing does not replace routine cervical screening. It provides an additional option for anyone who has been invited.

Reducing your risk

We recommend you consider going for cervical screening every time you are invited, even if you have had a previous normal result.

Let your GP or practice nurse know if you think you should be invited for screening.

Even if you have had the HPV vaccine we still recommend you consider going for cervical screening when invited.

Consider stopping smoking, as smoking increases your risk of cervical cancer.

If you have symptoms such as unusual vaginal discharge or bleeding, or pain during or after sex, please speak to your doctor even if you have had a normal cervical screening result.