

Let's Talk Cervical Screening

430,000+

women and people with a cervix across Yorkshire and the Humber are not up to date with their screening.¹

So, why does this matter to me?



Let's talk **Cervical Screening**

Cervical screening - or the smear test - is a free health check available on the NHS throughout the UK.²

It checks the health of the cervix, the opening to the womb from the vagina,³ and it's **one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.**⁴

It's not a test for cervical cancer, but helps to prevent the disease.⁴

What's the story with HPV?

Cervical screening checks for **high-risk types of a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV).**^{4,5} High-risk types of HPV infection – which often have no symptoms – can cause abnormal changes to the cells in your cervix which if left untreated, might turn into cervical cancer over time.^{4,5}

There are more than 200 types of HPV, and in most cases, they're harmless. **However, HPV infections, particularly high-risk types, can lead to the development of cancer.**⁵

You can get HPV from any kind of sexual contact, whether penetrative (e.g., vaginal, anal) or not (e.g., oral sex, genital touching, shared use of sex toys).^{4,5}

Most sexually active adults will get HPV at some point in their lives.^{4,5} It's common, and nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about.⁴

Who's cervical screening for?

Women and people with a cervix (including trans men, non-binary and intersex people), **from the ages of 25 to 64 years old.**^{2,3}

As long as you haven't changed your gender marker in your NHS records, **you'll automatically get an invitation letter in the post when it's your time** to book.^{2,3}

Let's talk **top tips** for cervical screening

Beforehand

There are some things which you can do to make you feel more comfortable:

- Consider asking for a doctor or nurse of a particular gender⁶
- Ask for the first appointment of the day to reduce your waiting time⁶
- Request a longer appointment so you have more time to ask questions⁶
- Take a friend, family member or partner with you⁶
- Wear clothing that you're comfortable in and only have to remove what you want to⁶
- Try to go to the toilet before so you're not clenching or feeling fidgety⁷

During

- Ask for a smaller speculum⁶
- Put the speculum in yourself⁶
- Change position if you're feeling discomfort,⁶ or see if the speculum can be inserted more slowly⁷
- Think of something to distract you or listen to music⁷
- Take control of your breathing⁷
- Ask your doctor or nurse to talk you through what's happening⁷

After

- Wear a sanitary pad or panty-liner as you may experience some light bleeding (spotting) the day after⁸
- Take a paracetamol or ibuprofen to ease any discomfort⁷
- Speak to your GP if you have any concerns, or contact Ask Eve (0808 802 0019), if you have further support needs



Let's talk **booking** your cervical screening

Once you've received an invitation letter from the NHS in the post,⁹ you can book your cervical screening by contacting your GP surgery over the phone, or sometimes online.³

In some areas, you can choose to contact your local sexual health clinic to book or go to a walk-in centre.⁹

You should still make an appointment if you...



- Haven't had sex before, for a long time, or have only had one partner^{4,5}
- You're in an LGBTQI+ relationship^{4,6}
- Had a partial hysterectomy whereby the cervix isn't removed⁴
- Have missed your previous consultation⁹
- Think you're due your cervical screening but haven't been sent a letter, or have lost your invite⁹
- Asked to be taken off the NHS invite list – simply request to be put back on again⁴
- Aren't registered with a GP
- Have been vaccinated against HPV⁴

Take action!



Scan to learn more.

References: 1. NHS England. Cervical Screening Programme - Coverage Statistics. July 2024. Last accessed: December 2024 2. NHS. Cervical Screening. Available at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening Last accessed: December 2024 3. NHS. What is cervical screening? Available at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/what-is-cervical-screening/ Last accessed: December 2024 4. NHS. Why cervical screening is important. Available at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/why-its-important/ Last accessed: December 2024 5. Cancer Research UK. Let's talk about HPV: 6 common questions answered. Available at: <https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2021/06/16/lets-talk-about-hpv-6-common-questions-answered/> Last accessed: December 2024 6. The Eve Appeal. Facts and tips for cervical screening. Available at: <https://eveappeal.org.uk/gynaecological-cancers/cervical-cancer/facts-and-tips-for-cervical-screening/> Last accessed: December 2024 7. The Gynae Centre. 8 tips for making your smear test more comfortable. Available at: <https://www.gynae-centre.co.uk/blog/8-tips-for-making-your-smear-test-more-comfortable/> Last accessed: December 2024 8. NHS. What happens at your cervical screening appointment. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/what-happens/> Last accessed: December 2024 9. NHS. How to book cervical screening. Available at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/how-to-book/ Last accessed: December 2024

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