

**stop
cancer,
before it
starts**

Your smear test results

**This leaflet tells you
about your results.**



**Healthier
Scotland**
Scottish
Government

This leaflet provides information about the results of your smear test, how they will be monitored and any treatment you may need.

If you feel anxious about your test results, you may find it helpful to talk about it with someone. Your nurse or GP can give you further information, answer your questions and reassure you that changes are common and can be easily and effectively treated.

It's important to continue to go for screening every time you're invited.

Your risk of cervical cancer increases if:

- you are or **have ever been sexually active** – this includes penetrative sex and other types of sexual activity, such as skin-to-skin contact of the genital area, or using sex toys
- you **smoke** – tobacco smoke affects the cells in your cervix.

It saves
around 5,000 lives
every year in the UK
and prevents
8 out of 10 cervical
cancers from
developing.

It can
pick up changes
to your cells
even if you look
and feel healthy
and have no
symptoms.

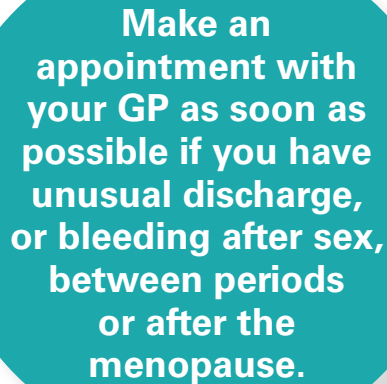
**don't
ignore**
the benefits
of getting
screened

It can
stop cervical
cancer before
it starts.

It's your
best protection
against cervical
cancer even if
you've been
immunised
against HPV.

Your results

- Smear tests are designed to pick up any changes so they can be easily and effectively treated and monitored.
- Changes in cells are very common.
- Any treatment you may need is usually simple and you can almost certainly be treated as an outpatient.



Make an appointment with your GP as soon as possible if you have unusual discharge, or bleeding after sex, between periods or after the menopause.

Your results letter will tell you if there are:

- no changes to your cells
- not enough cells to test
- minor changes to your cells
- changes which require further investigation.

No changes to your cells

- In most cases your letter will say 'no changes'.
- You'll be invited to have another smear test in three or five years as usual.

Not enough cells to test

- Sometimes there are not enough cells in the sample to examine.
- This is not unusual and you'll be invited to repeat the test in three months' time or to have further investigations at a colposcopy clinic (see page 6).

Minor changes to your cells

- These sometimes clear up on their own and do not require any treatment.
- These changes will be monitored to check that they have cleared up so you'll be invited to have another smear test in a few months' time.

Changes which require further investigation

- If changes are detected which require further investigation you'll be referred to a colposcopy clinic (see page 6) for examination to check whether the changes need to be monitored or treated.

Your questions answered

What happens at the colposcopy clinic?


A colposcopy is an examination of the cervix using a special microscope called a colposcope. The colposcope looks like a large pair of binoculars on a stand. It doesn't go inside you. The specialist will gently insert a speculum into your vagina and will look at your cervix through the colposcope. The colposcope magnifies your cervix so that the specialist can see where the changes are and what they look like. Detailed information about colposcopy will be sent to you with your appointment for the colposcopy clinic.

What about treatment?

Sometimes treatment isn't necessary. If this is the case, the specialist will explain why and will arrange for you to have smear tests more often. In some cases you'll be asked to come back to the clinic for further colposcopy examinations.

If necessary you can have a local anaesthetic and you should feel no more than slight discomfort. The specialist treating you will explain what to expect.

Your follow-up appointment will be with your specialist, nurse or GP.



**You can bring
a friend or
relative to your
appointment.**

What causes changes in my cervix?

Most changes in the cells of the cervix are caused by a virus called the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is very common – 8 out of 10 people in Scotland will catch it at some point in their lives. Because HPV usually has no symptoms, many people have it for months or years without knowing it.

Your body fights off most HPV infections naturally, but about 1 in 10 infections are harder to get rid of.

The types of HPV that can cause changes in the cells of your cervix are transmitted through sexual contact. This includes penetrative sex as well as other types of sexual activity, such as skin-to-skin contact of the genital area, or using sex toys.

Can the test detect all changes?

No. The test can sometimes miss changes and changes can also happen between tests, so it's important to go for a smear test every time you're invited.

Are there any symptoms?

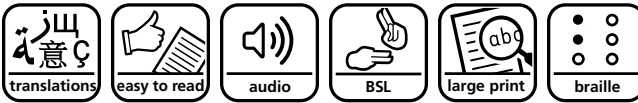
There are usually no symptoms with changes in cervical cells and sometimes there are no symptoms with early-stage cervical cancer. Make an appointment with your GP as soon as possible if you have unusual discharge, or bleeding after sex, between periods or after the menopause.


Want to know more?

Talk to your nurse or GP, visit nhsinform.scot or call **0800 22 44 88** (textphone **18001 0800 22 44 88**). The helpline is open every day 8 am to 10 pm and also provides an interpreting service.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust: visit jostrust.org.uk or call **0808 802 8000**.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:



 **0131 314 5300**

 **nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net**

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