

Helping to prevent **cervical cancer**

www.screeningservices.org



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This leaflet aims to give you information that could help to prevent cervical cancer. You can reduce your chances of developing cervical cancer by going for cervical screening regularly.

“All over Wales women are having it.”
If you’re between 20 and 64 we will invite you for a smear test every three years.

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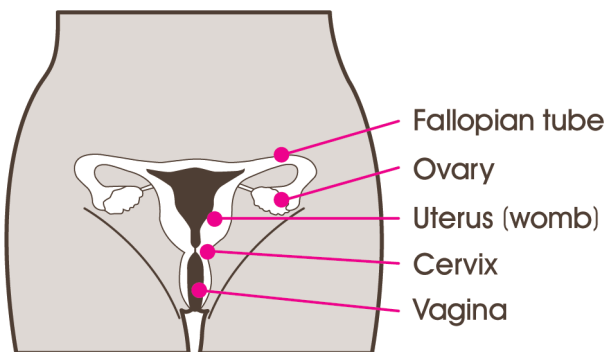
Cervical cancer is the second most common cause of cancer in women under the age of 35, but it can affect women of all ages.

We (**Cervical Screening Wales**) are responsible for the NHS cervical screening programme in Wales.

What you should know

- Cervical screening is known as the 'smear test'.
- The cervical smear is **not** a test for cancer. It aims to prevent cancer from developing, but sometimes it can detect cancer.
- Smear tests look for abnormal changes in cells that are mostly caused by human papilloma viruses (HPVs).
- HPVs that cause cervical cancer are passed on during sex.
- HPVs can cause changes in the cervical cells that may lead to cervical cancer.
- Girls aged 12 to 13 years can have a vaccine to protect against some types of HPVs. Older girls under the age of 18 will receive the vaccine through a catch-up programme.

Where is the cervix?



Your cervix is the lower part of your womb (also called a 'uterus'). (Your cervix is also known as the 'neck of the womb'). Your cervix connects with the top end of your vagina.

Cervical cancer

Abnormal cells on your cervix could develop into cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer can spread to other parts of your body, including your womb and bowel.

Some HPVs are the main cause of cervical cancer. If you smoke, it can increase the risk of developing cervical cancer.

What is a smear test?

Smear tests check the health of your cervix by taking a sample of cells. The test is quick and simple and should not be painful, but some women may find it uncomfortable. If abnormal cells are found, you may need treatment to prevent cervical cancer from developing.

Why go for a smear test?

Going for smear tests regularly can prevent around 75% of cases of cervical cancer from developing but, like any screening test, it is not 100% reliable.

How will the test be taken?

We will invite you when you are due for a smear test. A doctor or practice nurse in your local surgery or sexual-health clinic can carry out the test. The person carrying out the test puts an instrument called a speculum into your vagina to see your cervix. They use a small brush to sample the cells and then send them to a laboratory to be looked at under a microscope.

Who should have a smear?

- We will invite you for a smear test every three years if you are aged between 20 and 64. If you are over 64 you can only have a smear test if you have never had one before.
- It does not matter whether you are a virgin (this means you have never had sex) or not or whether you are in a different-sex or same-sex relationship. You should still come for a smear test when we invite you.

The HPV vaccine

The HPV vaccine is available for girls aged 12 to 13 through the School Immunisation Programme. For more information about the vaccine, visit the NHS Immunisation Information website (see page 7 for details).

Even if you have had the HPV vaccine, it is important to go for a smear test when you are invited.

Cervical cancer is more common in women who:

- do not go for a smear when they are invited
- have had several sexual partners (or have a sexual partner who has had other sexual partners)
- do not use condoms, or
- smoke.

How can a woman help herself?

Early cervical cancer does not always show symptoms so it is important to go for regular smear tests. It is also important to go to the doctor if you have any of the following symptoms, even if you have had a normal smear test result.

- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Bleeding between your periods
- Bleeding or pain during or after sex
- Bleeding after you have gone through menopause

A smear test – **have it.**

**For more information or advice,
visit the following websites.**

Cervical Screening Wales

www.screeningservices.org/csw

NHS Cervical Screening

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

Tell Her

www.tellher.com

Jo's Trust

www.jotrust.co.uk

NHS Immunisation Information

www.immunisation.nhs.uk/hpv

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org

Beating Cervical Cancer

new.wales.gov.uk/

beatingcervicalcancer/home

