

# HPV CERVICAL SCREENING NEWSLETTER

November 2023

## **\*\*Important Programme Update\*\***

### **Revised Cervical Screening Form**

A new cervical screening form is now available for printing via Screenlink and in electronic format on the Socrates and Helix systems. It will be available electronically on Health One in the new year. The new form has been re-designed based on your feedback. The layout has been improved with the aim of providing greater clarity in the sections identifying the clinically-responsible doctor and the sampletaker.

The screening form has now been separated from the accompanying information sheet. Both are now available to order in print separately. Screenlink is aware of this change and will inform your staff when it places its next orders for consumables. Our contracted laboratories will continue to accept the existing form until all stock is used up.

### **Removal of PPSN from a person's letter**

To reduce the impact of data incidents caused by screening invitation letters being opened by unintended recipients, we are **removing PPSN numbers from screening invitation letters**. Please continue to include the PPSN on the screening form. This ensures that the person's record is matched successfully on the cervical screening register. Administrative staff may need to remind people to bring their PPSN while booking appointments, if that information is not already available to the sampletaker.

### **Sampletaking and seasonal post**

We are expecting an increase in cervical screening samples before the end of the year and are asking you, where possible, to post cervical screening samples by **Wednesday December 20**, to ensure that their delivery is not affected by the increased pressures on An Post over Christmas.

When taking samples, please be mindful of the extra time they may take to reach laboratories over the festive period. This includes ensuring that the sample vial has at least 42 days left before its expiry date. Normal postage resumes from **Wednesday 27 December**.



## Revised Quality Assurance Standards for Primary Care

We have published three new versions of our Quality Standards including those for primary care & other settings. They are now available on our [Healthcare Professionals website](#). Please ensure that both administrative & clinical staff read and understand their responsibility in ensuring compliance with the standards. Our [lunchtime webinar](#) on Wednesday 06 December 2023 will discuss the new standards. A recording will be available on our website afterwards.

## Reduced screening uptake

The programme has seen a sustained reduction in the number of women attending for cervical screening since April 2023 and the autumn has not brought the expected seasonal increase in participation. We are asking all clinics and practices to encourage eligible women to choose screening at every suitable opportunity. We would also like to highlight the contractual obligation to provide screening opportunities to any person who requires cervical screening – they do not need to be an existing patient of your practice.

We are aware that occasionally some women may request other services when attending for a CervicalCheck cervical screening test. We acknowledge the challenge that this can create.

## Important reminder regarding CervicalCheck supporting the request from women in their 60s for a one-time HPV cervical screening test

This October, we started issuing invite letters to women aged over 65 years as part of our work to increase equity in screening. We want to provide an opportunity for one HPV screen to women who were not included in the March 2020 age extension as they had finished their screening journey at that time.

We have now received feedback from women in this cohort reporting that despite having proof of their invitation

letter and full screening eligibility displayed on the website, they are not being accommodated for screening appointments in primary care. We contacted all contracted doctors in October to provide information about this screening initiative for women in this age bracket. Please ensure that all programme correspondence is shared, in particular, with practice administration staff for their information and awareness. If you have any further questions please contact [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie)



## Update on laboratory recommendation

The laboratory recommendation has changed for instances where the sampletaker records any detail about an abnormal or ‘suspicious’ cervix on the cervical screening form.

Programme laboratories will cease recommending referral to colposcopy in these instances and instead, the laboratory recommendation for the appropriate screening interval will be based on the HPV, cytology result and screening history only.

An additional comment/recommendation will be applied to the laboratory result recommending “Referral to specialist gynaecology”. This referral recommendation will not be electronically transferred to CervicalCheck, nor will the woman receive the recommendation in her result letter. The responsibility for follow-up with the woman and secondary care lies with the clinically responsible doctor for the test. This change took effect from 09 October, and we are asking that this is circulated to all sampletakers under your clinical governance.

Remember: if you are concerned that a woman may have a cervical cancer, DO NOT TAKE a screening test. Instead, contact your local colposcopy unit immediately and arrange an urgent referral. If a woman presents with clinical symptoms which require further investigation, but you are not specifically concerned about cervical cancer, please refer to specialist gynaecology services. If her screening test is due, it should be taken, but you should not wait for the result of this screening test before referring her on to the appropriate service.

Note: There are a number of benign cervical anomalies and pathologies that can change the appearance of the cervix. More useful online resources can be found at: [nssresources.ie](https://nssresources.ie) or contact our training unit at [stu@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:stu@cervicalcheck.ie)

## Vial expiration

Please note the upcoming vial batch expiry dates, as follows:

Lot Number	Expiry Date	Use by	Remove from stock
2011AA	11/01/2024	30 Nov 2023	Before 30 Nov 23
2186BE	14/06/2024	3 May 2024	3 May 2024
2269AA	26/09/2024	15 August 2024	15 August 2024
3039BA	08/02/2025	28 December 2024	28 December 2024
3172AA	21/06/2025	10 May 2025	10 May 2025

These vials must be removed from use in your practice as per the above table. Payment will not issue for tests submitted to the programme laboratory in expired vials. Samples may also have to be destroyed and repeated.

The vial ID sticker must be placed by the requesting sampletaker on the corresponding request form.

## **Cervical screening tests resume at National Cervical Screening Laboratory at The Coombe Hospital**

On 24 October 2023, the National Cervical Screening Laboratory at the Coombe Hospital resumed processing samples for CervicalCheck in the counties Kilkenny, Carlow, Kildare, Wicklow. The lab is also processing samples for Well Woman Centres and IFPA clinics. The resumption of services follows the reinstatement of the laboratory accreditation.

As sample processing resumes at the Coombe Hospital, women can be reassured that there will be no change in the way samples are processed. Sampletakers can send their samples to the programme as usual and women and their GPs will continue to receive their CervicalCheck results within the usual timeframe.

All our CervicalCheck samples go to one of two quality assured laboratories – the National Cervical Screening Laboratory in Dublin and Quest Diagnostics in the US. Quality assurance underpins all our work. You can read more about our laboratory Quality Assurance. Further information about cervical screening is available on [www.hse.ie/cervicalcheck](http://www.hse.ie/cervicalcheck)

### **Piloting electronic referral between GPs and colposcopy clinics nationally**

A pilot project for electronic referral direct from your practice management system to the hospital colposcopy unit is under way at University Hospital Kerry. The aim of electronic referral is to help prevent delays for screening participants, ensure a robust referral process and optimise use of resources. The result of the cervical screening test must be attached to the electronic referral.

We aim to roll out electronic referral nationwide. We will be back in touch to advise you when this service is available for colposcopy clinics in your area.

For those involved in the pilot rollout with Kerry colposcopy please contact [support.healthlink@healthmail.ie](mailto:support.healthlink@healthmail.ie) & [support.healthlink@hse.ie](mailto:support.healthlink@hse.ie) directly if you have issues submitting the electronic referral or attaching the screening report to colposcopy.

### **Non-programme tests reminder**

Non-programme tests are not part of CervicalCheck and are not recorded on the Cervical Screening Register. If an individual chooses to have a non-programme test, please inform them that this test result will not form part of their CervicalCheck screening record.

# Ireland is on target to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040



"Today is an extraordinary day." Minister Stephen Donnelly announcing Ireland's target date to eliminate cervical cancer, thanking "our passionate patient advocates and all partnership stakeholders." [#TogetherTowardsElimination](#)

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly made the announcement on Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action, 17 November 2023. Ireland publicly committed to the World Health Organization's (WHO) global initiative to eliminate cervical cancer in January 2023 – one of the first countries in the world to do so.

## Get involved

Be part of eliminating cervical cancer in Ireland. The Cervical Cancer Elimination Partnership will develop an action plan to ensure Ireland remains on track to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040. This will start with a national public consultation in 2024.

We're calling on everyone to get involved in this public consultation to plan and support Ireland's work to reach the 2040 target. You can express your interest in taking part in the consultation by emailing [publichealth.support@screeningservice.ie](mailto:publichealth.support@screeningservice.ie)

## Validation project in respect of CRDs/HPs registered with CervicalCheck

We are contacting all Clinically Responsible Doctors to ask them to validate that health professionals under their clinical responsibility and in their employment are registered with the CervicalCheck programme.

Please ensure that all health professionals in your practice are registered with CervicalCheck in compliance with QR 3.08 Registration to provide cervical screening in Standards for Quality Assurance in Cervical Screening: Quality Assurance in Primary Care and Other Cervical Screening Settings.

Under these standards you are obligated to advise us if any registered health professionals cease their employment in your practice. Clinically Responsible Doctors and sample takers must register with CervicalCheck to provide cervical screening services and provide evidence that they have undertaken, at a



minimum, an introductory module through online learning that outlines the requirements and operation of the programme as part of their registration process. It is the responsibility of the contractholder to ensure that any new sample takers in their practice register with the programme. Note: Sample takers should register separately at each practice with each CRD where they provide cervical screening services.

### Schedule of learning events

The Screening Training Unit's (STU) final lunchtime webinar for 2023 takes place on Wednesday 06 December; 'An overview of CervicalCheck Quality Assurance Guidelines - What do they mean for sample takers?'. We are in the process of finalising our 2024 topics but in the meantime recordings of previous webinars are available [here](#). Keep an eye on [our website](#) for further updates.



Don't forget to follow us on Twitter [@NSShse](#) to get all your up-to-date experience. [#choosescreening](#)

DECEMBER 2023	SPEAKER	DATE AND TIME	LINK TO REGISTER
An overview of CervicalCheck Quality Assurance Guidelines - What do they mean for sample takers?	Dr Sarah Fitzgibbon	Wednesday 06th December 1-2pm	<a href="#">An overview of CervicalCheck Quality Assurance Guidelines - What this means for Sample takers</a>
	Primary Care Clinical Advisor		
	CervicalCheck		
	Laura Tobin		
	Deputy Programme Manager		
	CervicalCheck		



### Contact us

#### CervicalCheck

Email: [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie)  
Freephone: 1800 45 45 55  
Website: [hse.ie/cervicalcheck](https://hse.ie/cervicalcheck)  
Post: CervicalCheck, Freepost LK407,  
Limerick.

#### Primary Care Coordinator

Email: [primarycarecoordinator@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:primarycarecoordinator@cervicalcheck.ie)  
Telephone: 061 406 547 or 061 406 567