

## Cervical screening

### Helpful language in discussing cervical screening with a woman

Cervical screening tests women for changes in the cells of the cervix. It is a test to detect early cell changes before they become cancerous. It is not a test for cancer. Changes in these cells are generally caused by certain types of human papilloma virus (HPV).

It involves a simple procedure where a sample of cells is taken from the neck of the womb (cervix). These cells are then sent to the laboratory to be examined.

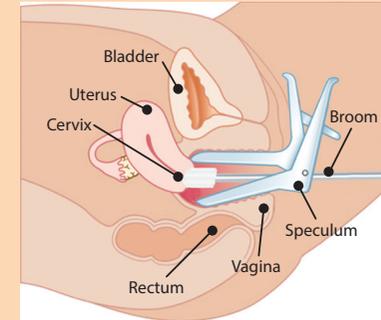
It is important to advise women that they should seek medical advice if they experience any symptoms like abnormal vaginal bleeding or unusual discharge.

### Who needs a screening test?

CervicalCheck provides free cervical screening tests to women aged 25-60. Women who have never been sexually active and have been invited for screening may present for tests. They should be counselled and advised that the risk of developing cervical cancer is low.

### Consent

Informed consent is required for transfer of personal health information between service providers in the cervical screening pathway. Women should sign the cytology form to indicate their consent each time they have cervical screening. Women should be given a copy of the Information Sheet for Women which accompanies the Cervical Screening Form (available to download in 12 languages on [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)).



## Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

### Helpful language in discussing HPV with a woman

It is a very common virus that can affect the cells of the cervix and 80% of adults will have it at some point in their lives.

HPV is usually spread by direct skin to skin contact during vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has been infected with HPV.

HPV infections have no symptoms and most people never know they are infected. It is normally cleared by a person's own immune system. It is not possible to know from whom the HPV originated.

Smoking reduces the body's ability to clear the virus. Stopping smoking is strongly advised.

There are some types of HPV infection which are associated with cervical cancer. Cervical cancer can be prevented through regular cervical screening tests for early detection and treatment of pre-cancerous changes.

### HPV testing is used in cervical screening

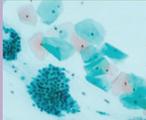
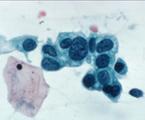
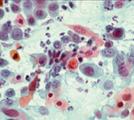
Testing for HPV types is used in certain circumstances. Where low grade changes are found in the cervical cells, a HPV test is done to look for types of HPV associated with cervical cancer. HPV testing is also used in colposcopy after treatment, to determine if treatment was successful.

### HPV vaccine

Women who have had the HPV vaccine still require regular screening. See [www.hpv.ie](http://www.hpv.ie) for more information.

For more general information on HPV, see [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)

### Abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix

Transient infection		HPV viral persistence	
			
			
Normal cervix	HPV-infection cervix	Precancerous lesion	Cancer
Clearance	Progression	Regression	Invasion

## Results and follow-up

### Helpful language in discussing follow-up and colposcopy with a woman

If the HPV test is negative, low grade changes are not a cause for concern and routine screening (3 or 5 years) is recommended. If HPV is detected or if high grade changes are found, these are less likely to clear up on their own. A more detailed examination called a colposcopy is done.

A colposcopy exam is carried out in a similar way to the first screening test. This procedure is usually carried out in a hospital outpatient clinic by a doctor or nurse.

A colposcope is a small microscope with a light that allows the nurse or doctor to make a more thorough examination of the abnormal cells on the cervix. The colposcope does not touch or go inside a woman. Treatment to remove abnormal cells may be carried out at this time. After the colposcopy the doctor or nurse should give further information, including some guidelines for after care.

## Contact details

CervicalCheck Freephone number: 1800 45 45 55  
 Website: [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)  
 Screening training unit: 061 406 565 / 564

Consumables, cervical screening forms: Screenlink Healthcare 01 460 5270  
 Disposable specula: Fannin Direct 01 5133 222  
 Promotional material, leaflets: Inform Display Systems [www.healthbrochures.ie](http://www.healthbrochures.ie)

Results	Explanation of the most common results
<b>No abnormality detected</b>	In the sample taken, no abnormal cells were detected at this time.
<b>Unsatisfactory/ inadequate</b>	The laboratory was unable to read the cell sample which may be because there were not enough cells to analyse or because cells were obscured by blood/discharge/lubricant. The repeat sample should not be taken less than three months from the date of the last screening test so that enough cells are present for a repeat test.
<b>ASC-US</b> <b>Atypical squamous cells of undetermined significance</b>	The test has found some minor changes in the cells of the cervix that may be referred to as borderline. Some cells from the lining of the outer cervix (also called squamous cells) cannot definitely be described as normal. This will result in a HPV test for the types of HPV associated with cervical cancer. If HPV is negative, routine re-call is recommended. If HPV positive, a referral to colposcopy is recommended.
<b>ASC-H</b> <b>Atypical squamous cells – cannot exclude HSIL</b>	Cervical cells do not appear normal. There is a possibility that there may be abnormal cell changes which are ‘high-grade’. The woman requires referral to colposcopy for further assessment.
<b>Indeterminate HPV test</b>	Any HPV test not processed for technical reasons will generate a referral to colposcopy recommendation.
<b>AGC</b> <b>Atypical glandular cells</b>	Some cells in the inner lining of the cervix appear abnormal. The woman requires referral to colposcopy.
<b>LSIL result</b> <b>Low grade squamous intra epithelial lesion = low grade changes</b>	The test has found some mild changes to the cells of the cervix. LSIL is not cancer. These cells can often return to normal. This will result in a HPV test for the types of HPV associated with cervical cancer. If HPV negative, routine re-call is recommended. If HPV positive, a referral to colposcopy is recommended.
<b>HSIL result</b> <b>High grade squamous intra epithelial lesion = high grade changes</b>	These are moderate to severe abnormal cell changes that need further investigation. This does not mean a woman has cancer. A referral to colposcopy is recommended.
<b>Broken/Damaged/ Expired vial or sample</b>	The screening test could not be processed and will need to be repeated no earlier than three months from the date of the last test.

## Practical strategies for promoting CervicalCheck in your practice

### Waiting room display

- Up-to-date CervicalCheck poster and promotional leaflets.
- List of CervicalCheck registered doctors and nurses.
- Appointment availability.

### Who has not been screened?

- Check screening status of all eligible women including those previously screened.
- Computer instruction for identifying women, demonstration videos/pdf handouts available in the health professionals section on [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie) for all software GP packages.
- Consider use of web-based texts to prompt unscreened women to attend.
- Once identified, flag woman’s record for screening.

### Remember

- Ask the question “do you need a test?” or “are you up to date with your screening test?”
- Eligible women do not need a letter of invitation.
- Woman may have been screened elsewhere.
- Document that cervical screening has been discussed.

### Website uses [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)

- Check woman’s eligibility or Freephone 1800 45 45 55.
- Information Sheet for Women available in 12 languages.
- Pictorial leaflets available.
- Encourage women to use website for information.

## Visit our eLearning portal via the Health Professional’s section of [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)

- Accredited Clinical eUpdates
- eLearning modules
- Online lectures and resources