

Trauma Informed Care



What is Trauma Informed Care?

- Recognises the widespread impact of trauma
- Understands how trauma can affect healthcare experiences
- Aims to prevent re-traumatisation in practice



Why it matters?

- Trauma is often not visible
- It may affect any interaction
- 52% of women report having experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (CSO, 2022)

Key Principle: Assume trauma may be present and approach every interaction with care



Signs of Trauma

Trauma may be present as :

- Behavioural, emotional or physical responses
- Anxiety, distress or withdrawal

Observe for:

- Subtle non-verbal cues of disengagement
- Changes in body posture
- Tension or freezing
- Reduced communication or eye contact



Building trust and reducing stress

- Ensure the woman knows that she is in control and can stop at any time
- Ask for consent before touching
- Explain the procedure step-by-step
- Agree on a hand signal to stop
- Offer a choice of sample taker
- Allow choice of position for comfort
- Allow self insertion of the speculum
- Offer preferred language
- Offer reassurance and calming breathing techniques
- Suggest they bring a support person



Responding to distress

- Stop the test
- Gently use her name to reconnect
- Encourage grounding:

“What can you see around you?”

“What can you hear right now?”

Use supportive language:

- “You’re in control”
- “We can stop at any time”



Trauma-informed options for women who need extra support

Women can access cervical screening in a clinical setting designed around safety and dignity

1. Available in **4 Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATU) -Letterkenny, Rotunda, Galway and Waterford.** Specifically for women with a history of sexual trauma. Care is delivered by sample takers trained in trauma awareness and consent-based approaches
2. Contact **access@cervicalcheck.ie** for additional support