

Guidance Note 12

CervicalCheck: Participation, Consent and Opt out

Regular programme screening: A cervical screening test should not be a “one-off” test. Women will be recalled by CervicalCheck based on the management recommendation received from the laboratory.

Benefit: In terms of prevention, early detection and treatment, the benefits of cervical screening must be weighed against any harm, physical or psychological.

Assessment: Has the women ever been sexually active? Cervical cancer is rare in women who have never been sexually active (Winer et al, 2003). This is not to say that there is no risk, only very low risk.

Consent: Can the woman give informed consent? The success of informed consent depends on the woman being able to understand and sufficiently retain the information they are given so as to enable them to analyse that information and use it to make an informed decision. Informed consent is a legal and ethical obligation. The **National Consent Policy** was introduced by the HSE in May 2013.

Consent in CervicalCheck: Women are required to consent to participate in CervicalCheck in writing, by signing the Cervical Screening Form or by witnessed mark or verbal witnessed consent. Giving consent means allowing CervicalCheck to receive, hold and use personal details and information about the screening sample and to share this information with the relevant stakeholders. CervicalCheck does not accept third-party consent.

Presumption of capacity: All adults are presumed to have capacity to consent or refuse treatment. The test for capacity is a functional test i.e. it is to be judged in relation to the decision to be made at the time it is to be made.

The presumption of capacity should only be challenged if a service user, having been given all appropriate help and support, is unable to understand and use the information to make and communicate a clear and consistent choice.

The Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act was passed by the Oireachtas in December 2015.

Opt-out: Women may choose not to be part of the CervicalCheck screening programme by completing an Opt-out form (Freephone 1800 45 45 55 to request or download from www.cervicalcheck.ie). Women who opt-out will be made inactive on the Cervical Screening Register (CSR) and will no longer receive letters from CervicalCheck inviting them for free cervical screening tests.

Women who change their mind at a later date can have cervical screening if they choose by attending a CervicalCheck registered doctor or practice nurse.

Cervical Screening Not Advised: Where a healthcare professional deems that cervical screening is not advised for a woman, and that her situation is unlikely to change, the healthcare professional can complete and sign the Cervical Screening Not Advised form (Freephone 1800 45 45 55 to request or download from www.cervicalcheck.ie) and forward it to CervicalCheck. In this case, the woman will be made permanently inactive on the Cervical Screening Register (CSR) and will not receive any further correspondence from CervicalCheck.

The **Access Officer** Is available to help women with special needs with any queries or assistance required in relation to cervical screening. The Access Officer can assist organisations that provide services for these women, by offering information and guidance.

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