About your combined smear test and HPV test

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Cervical screening saves lives

CervicalCheck is part of the National Screening Service.
The combined smear and HPV test

Smear tests identify the presence of cervical cell changes at the neck of the womb (cervix). HPV testing identifies the presence of the certain types of the human papillomavirus (HPV) which are known to cause most cervical cell changes.

How is the combined smear and HPV test done?

Your smear test sample, taken at the colposcopy clinic, will be checked in a laboratory for cell changes and certain HPV types.

What is HPV?

HPV is the human papilloma virus. There are over 100 different types of HPV. Most are low risk and do not cause changes to cervical cells. Some HPV high risk types can cause cell changes in the cervix (neck of the womb). HPV is a common virus. Most people get HPV at some time in their lives. HPV infections can persist without symptoms for many years and may clear up on their own. Most people will never know they have HPV because they have no symptoms and their immune systems can clear the virus.

If the HPV infection does not clear up on its own, there is a greater risk of developing cervical cell changes which could develop into cancer in the future if left untreated. The earlier the cell changes are found the easier they are to treat.

How do you get HPV?

HPV is spread by direct skin to skin contact with someone who has HPV. Most people who are sexually active will have HPV at some time. The virus has no symptoms so you can have it for many years without knowing about it.

Remember, most people are infected with HPV at some point in their lives, but never know they have been infected. Just like other viral infections such as a cold, HPV is usually cleared (without treatment) by the body’s immune system.

Why are you being offered a combined smear and HPV test?

You are being offered this test because:

• You have had a treatment at a colposcopy clinic and this test can help reduce the need for annual smear tests.

Or

• You are attending a colposcopy clinic due to low grade cell changes, and this test can help reduce the need for a repeat colposcopy. It can indicate if you might need treatment.

What happens after the combined test?

What happens after the combined test will depend on the results of your combined test. You will get the results at the colposcopy clinic. You may require follow-up treatment at this clinic or you may be advised to return to screening with your doctor (GP) or practice nurse.