

HPV CERVICAL SCREENING NEWSLETTER

December 2022

Why YOUR contribution to screening mattered in 2022

Thank you to you and your team for your ongoing support to the CervicalCheck screening programme. This year, normal screening numbers resumed post-COVID-19 and we saw the benefit of the good work done by all GP practices during COVID-19 in screening women when their tests were due. Our colposcopy clinics too are largely meeting their timeframes for offering appointments to women referred on after screening.

In other positive news, recently, the National Cancer Registry Ireland report on screening offered data on the effectiveness of our programmes. It found:

- Overall, the rates of cervical cancer have shown a significant decreasing trend of 2.8% per year since 2009 following the introduction of cervical screening, reversing the previous trend of a significant increase from 1999 to 2009.
- The proportion of cases diagnosed with early-stage cancers (Stage 1 and Stage 2) is much higher in women in the screening age group (88%) than in the non-screening group (52%).

You can read more about the report later in this newsletter.

Finally, the National Cervical Screening Laboratory is due to open shortly, we look forward to seeing it ramp up to full capacity and capability through 2023 and beyond. For practices and colposcopy units who used to send their samples to the Coombe, we will be contacting you soon regarding a return to the screening service.

Again I would like to thank you all for your support and contribution to CervicalCheck in 2022, I look forward to working together in 2023. Wishing you all a healthy and happy Christmas.

An enduring legacy

It was with sadness that we marked the passing recently of women's health advocate Vicky Phelan. Vicky was a strong advocate for cervical screening who dedicated her last years to affecting real change for women. I extend my condolences to Vicky's family.

May she rest in peace.

Gráinne Gleeson, CervicalCheck Programme Manager

Screening for women not registered at your practice

It is a principle of CervicalCheck that women can book a screening test with any registered screener. This means a woman does not need to be your patient to have her screening test taken at your clinic. If they are 25 to 65 years of age and their test is due or if they have never had a test with the programme, they can get a free cervical screening test with any contracted provider. So far this year, the programme has received over 20 complaints and queries from women who have not been able to secure screening appointments at a GP practice where they are not registered. This is kept under regular review and queries are monitored and action taken where trends are identified.

Faxing referrals for colposcopy

While faxing is no longer a recommended method of communication, if you are faxing referrals please ensure that you receive a notification your message has been 'delivered'. You must also contact the unit to ensure the fax has reached them.

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 December cervical screening samples by **Wednesday December 21**, to ensure that their delivery is not affected by the increased seasonal pressures on An Post.

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, in case there are delays in delivery to the lab. Normal postage of sampling resumes from **Thursday 29 December** with the programme laboratory available to receive and process samples.

GP screening contract update

We thank you for your interest in being a CervicalCheck sampletaker and ask that you would bear with us as we process the large volume of requests received. To ensure the process is conducted in a seamless manner, you are requested to provide all details as required in the contract documentation issued. Around 70% of forms submitted are being returned for amendments and/or for completion of mandatory training. This impacts the processing time for all.

If there are any details that you are unsure of, please contact us via email at admin@cervicalcheck.ie or telephone 061 406 500 prior to submitting same. Staff members will endeavour to provide the details you require or advise how to access the relevant information.

Patient addresses

Please ensure that the current and full patient addresses are recorded on the cervical screening forms. The address recorded will be used to update the cervical screening register and to send the result letter to the woman.

If the woman is in the process of moving from one address to another around the time of her test, please ask her to which address she wishes the result to be sent.

Who is eligible for free cervical screening tests

As you are aware, the age range for screening increased from age 60 to age 65 on 30 March 2020. If a participant's 61st birthday was before this change, their screening journey is complete. They will not receive another routine invitation for cervical screening. This means that not all women between the age of 60 and 65 are eligible for cervical screening. If a participant has never had a cervical screening test they can ask any registered sampletaker for free CervicalCheck test up to age 66. You can check a person's next cervical screening date [here](#). If you have any concerns about a person's eligibility, contact CervicalCheck. Details available on the last page.

Next vial batch expiry date

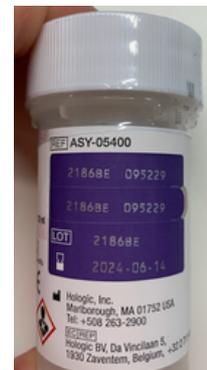
Practices should note the below vial batch expiry dates.

Lot number	Expiry date	Use by	Remove from stock
0339AA	04/12/2022	21/10/2022	Immediately
1071AA	09/03/2023	26/01/2023	26/01/2022
1095AA	05/04/2023	22/02/2023	22/02/2023
1120AA	28/04/2023	17/03/2023	17/03/2023

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 vials which have expired.

New look Hologic vials

Hologic vials for cervical screening vials have a new look! The vial with the purple label is now in use and available for ordering. We will continue to accept the older vials but they must be in date. You can check the manufacturer's expiry date on the vials. If you are using sticky patient labels please ensure that expiry date is not obscured on the sample vial.



New vial

Did you know? You can access all previous newsletters on the CervicalCheck website [here](#).

Self-sampling for HPV testing and CervicalCheck

Dr Laura Heavey, Specialist in Public Health Medicine in the National Screening Service, writes [here](#) about self-sampling and the work CervicalCheck is doing to assess how useful it might be, what people think about it and how reliable it is as part of a screening programme. We are examining the ways self-sampling might be added to the CervicalCheck programme in the future and will keep you up to date on our progress.

National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL) update

Significant progress is being made on the new NCSL. The laboratory is being developed by the HSE and the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital and is designed to be a national centre of excellence for cervical screening. It will be commissioned by Ireland's cervical screening programme, CervicalCheck, to process women's cervical screening samples. It is expected to be operating by year-end. Dr Cillian De Gascun has been appointed Interim Director (ID) for the NCSL and will lead out on the lab's operations. He will work closely with the laboratory manager in the commissioning of the lab's services, including the operation of its HPV and cytology services. The position of Lead Pathologist of NCSL has been filled by Dr Aoife Doyle.

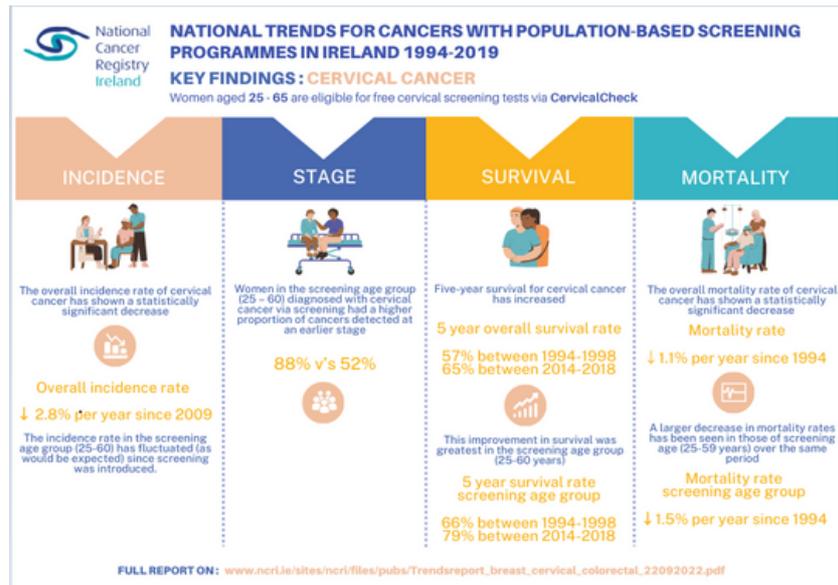
Winter series of webinars

The Screening Training Unit (STU) webinar series for healthcare professionals continues in November and December. You can watch back on previous webinars including 'LGBT+ awareness for Cervical Screening' and 'Increasing participation in Cervical Screening in Primary Care' [here](#). More information and registration for December's webinars is available [here](#).

Congratulations to Prof Nóirín Russell

We would like to congratulate CervicalCheck's Clinical Director Dr Nóirín Russell who has been awarded honorary professorship by University College Cork (UCC). Among the matters considered by the Clinical Professor Board at UCC was Dr Russell's work for CervicalCheck.

National Cancer Registry Ireland (NCRI) report shows positive impact of cancer screening programmes



A new report published by the NCRI shows the positive impact of BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and BowelScreen on cancer detection in Ireland. The key findings of the report, published on 22 September, titled [Breast, cervical and colorectal cancer 1994-2019: National trends for cancers with population-based screening programmes in Ireland](#), show a noticeable increase in earlier diagnosis, and a demonstrable reduction in mortality rates. The report finds that cancers detected via screening were, on average, found at much earlier stages in the screening age groups than in the non-screening groups; decreases in mortality rates for the three cancers were, in general, more substantial in the age-groups eligible for screening; and survival is now higher and has improved more markedly in the screening age groups for all three cancers. You can read the NSS's statement on the report [here](#).

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