



# About Cervical Screening



**This is a Plain English information leaflet about a Cervical Screening programme**

# What is CervicalCheck?

CervicalCheck is the cervical screening programme in Ireland.

It is part of the National Screening Service.

The Government pays for this health service.

You do not have to pay to use the service. It is free.

# What is a Cervix?

The cervix is at the top of your vagina.

It is the opening to your womb from your vagina.

It is inside your body so you cannot see it.

# What is Cervical Cancer?

Cancer is a serious disease that people can get.  
It can stop your body from working properly.

Cancer can be in different parts of your body.  
You can get cancer in your cervix.

Cells are tiny parts of your body.  
Cervical cancer happens when cells in the cervix change slowly over time.

Most cervical cancers are caused by a virus called Human Papillomavirus, also known as HPV.

# What is Cervical Screening?

A cervical screening test checks the health of your cervix.

We take a sample of cells from your cervix.

A sample is a small number of cells.

The sample is checked for HPV.

You can get HPV from any kind of sex or sexual touching with a man or a woman.

Most people get HPV at some time in their life.

Most people do not know they have HPV.

Your body gets rid of the HPV virus by itself.

For a small number of people, HPV can stay in your body and cause changes in the cells.

If HPV is found in your sample, we check to see if you have any cells in your cervix that are not normal.

# What is Cervical Screening?

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

It is important to go for your tests when they are due.

Cervical screening can help to find cancer early and give you more chance of getting better.

# Who should have a Cervical Screening Test?

All women and people with a cervix between the ages of 25 and 65 should go for regular cervical screening.

Ask your doctor or nurse if you are not sure if you need a cervical screening test.

If you are aged 25 to 29, you will usually have a cervical screening test every 3 years.

If you are aged 30 to 65, you will usually have a test every 5 years.

Some people will need screening more often. We will tell you if you do.

You can have a cervical screening test even if you have never had sex. HPV can be spread through skin-to-skin contact.

It is best to have the test when you are not having your period.

# Who should have a Cervical Screening Test?

CervicalCheck makes a list of everyone offered an appointment for a cervical screening test.

You can call or email us to check you are on this list, called a register.

# How can I get a Cervical Screening Test?

If you are on our register, we will send you a letter.

This letter invites you to make an appointment with a doctor or clinic that has signed up with CervicalCheck.

If you need extra support to take part in CervicalCheck.

Email [info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie) or

Call the Freephone number 1800 45 45 55

You do not need to be on our register or have a letter to have a cervical screening test.

You can make an appointment with your doctor or clinic.

We have a photo story about having a cervical screening test.

It tells you what happens when you go for this test.

You can bring someone to support you when you have the test if you want.



# Important Things to Know

CervicalCheck will give you information about our screening programme.

We will communicate with you in a clear way, and we will tell you the truth.

You will be asked for consent every time you have a cervical screening test.

Please see our leaflet on giving consent for screening programmes..

Cervical screening will not find every cervical cancer.

Please see our leaflet on the benefits and harms of screening.

CervicalCheck keeps your information safe and private.

Please read our leaflet on looking after your information.

# Getting your Results

CervicalCheck will send you a letter with your results in around 4 weeks.

Your doctor will get a copy of this letter.

Your sample is tested for HPV.

Your results say what CervicalCheck found in your test.

Most people will get a normal result.

This means you do not have HPV at this time.

Some people have HPV, but it is not causing changes to the cells in the cervix.

You will be invited for another screening test in 12 months.

Some people have HPV, and it is causing changes to the cells in the cervix.

You will be asked to go for another test.

Please see our information on having more tests.

# What are the signs of Cervical Cancer?

- Bleeding between periods
- Vaginal spotting or unusual discharge
- Pain during sex or bleeding after sex
- A pain anywhere between your belly button and the top of your thighs.

# Staying Healthy

You can cut down your risk of cervical cancer by having regular screening tests.

Talk to your doctor about any worries or signs of cervical cancer.

Stop smoking.

Smoking can stop the body from getting rid of viruses such as HPV.

Get the free HPV vaccine that is given to boys and girls in first year of secondary school.

This can protect you from some types of HPV.

# More information

[www.hse.ie/cervicalcheck](http://www.hse.ie/cervicalcheck)

Phone us free on 1800 45 45 55

[info@cervicalcheck.ie](mailto:info@cervicalcheck.ie)



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

