



Public Health Agency Young Person and Adult Screening Team

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Cervical Screening FAQ

I'm trying to get pregnant - should I have cervical screening?

We don't normally recommend that a woman should have cervical screening when she is (or might be) pregnant, but this would depend in an individual case on her previous history. If you've had abnormal smears in the past, for example, or if you haven't accepted your past invitations for screening, then you should consult your doctor or practice nurse to ask for advice.

I've had a hysterectomy - do I still need cervical screening?

The sort of smears which are sometimes taken after hysterectomy are not the routine tests that women have in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme, but are vault smears. They are part of surgical follow-up and depend upon the reason for the hysterectomy, what was found at the time, and whether or not the abnormal cells were completely removed.

The surgical team who performed the operation will decide what kind of follow-up is appropriate and you should talk it over with them. Normally speaking, if you do not have a cervix, then you do not need cervical screening.

I'm on the pill. Does this increase my risk of cervical cancer?

Evidence suggests that long-term use of combined oral contraceptives or progestogen-only injectable contraceptives is associated with a small increased risk of cervical cancer. The level of risk returns to that for never-users within 10 years of stopping use.

I'm not sexually active - do I still need cervical screening?

The evidence shows that if a woman has never been sexually active then her risk of developing cervical cancer is very low indeed. We don't say 'no risk' just 'low risk'. A woman who has ever had sex will probably have come into contact with HPV which causes cervical cancer so she should accept her invitation for cervical screening.

I am in a same sex relationship. Do I need cervical screening?

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) which causes cervical cancer can be transmitted between women. Even women who have never had sex with a man can't be said to be at no risk of contracting the virus, only at low risk. Therefore it is still advisable to be screened.

I'm worried about abnormal vaginal bleeding. Could I have cervical screening?

Screening is for women without symptoms. If you have a symptom which worries you, such as abnormal bleeding, pain or a discharge you should see your GP in the usual way. If necessary, you will be referred to a gynaecologist.

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