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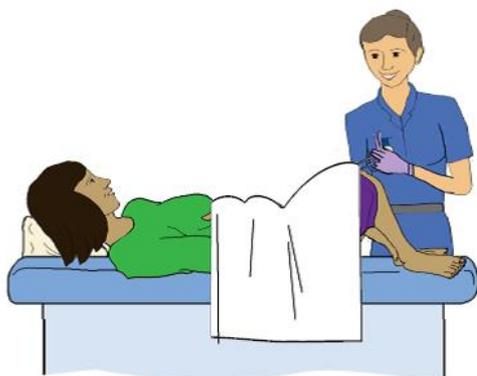
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Smear tests for people with a learning disability

Smear tests are happening and you may get a letter inviting you to go. We know you may find smear tests confusing or worrying, but you are not alone if you feel this way. If you want to ask questions about having a smear test at the moment, read our information about what is happening (<https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus/faqs>). You may want a friend, carer, or learning disability nurse to read it with you. You can also call our free Helpline (<https://www.jostrust.org.uk/get-support/helpline>) on **0808 802 8000**.

What is a smear test?



A smear test is a free health test. It is sometimes called cervical screening.

It makes sure your cervix is healthy.

Your cervix is inside your body at the top of your vagina. You cannot see it.

Video - What happens at a smear test?



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This video is about smear tests. It tells you what happens at a smear test and why it is important. Women with a learning disability are in the video and helped us make it.

What happens when I go for cervical screening (a sm...



Who has a smear test?



**25 to 64
years old**

All women between age 25 and 64 are asked if they want to have a smear test. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland you are invited:

- every 3 years between age 25 and 49
- every 5 years between age 50 and 64

In Scotland you are invited every 5 years between age 25 and 64.

Smear tests can help stop you getting cervical cancer. It is your choice whether to have a smear test. This information can help you decide.

Some carers, guardians, doctors or nurses don't think women with a learning disability need a smear test.



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Sometimes carers and guardians do not know if you are having sex.

Some parents and carers are embarrassed to talk about it. They may not help women with learning disabilities to get a test.

It is important that women with a learning disability are given the option to go to a smear test because it saves 5,000 lives every year.

What happens during a smear test?



You get a letter from your doctor asking you to go for a smear test.



You need to call your doctors to book a time and day to go. Book a time and day when you are not having your period.



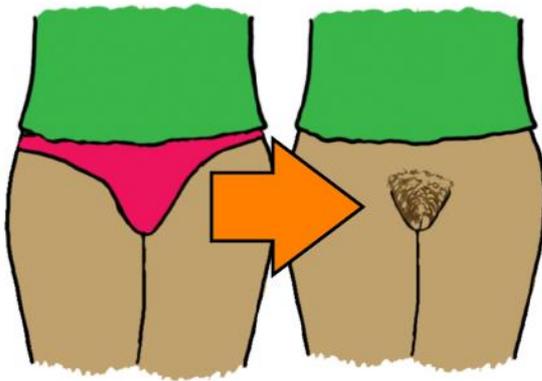
A nurse usually does the smear test. If you want to make sure a female nurse does it, tell them.



If you want a friend to stay with you, tell them.



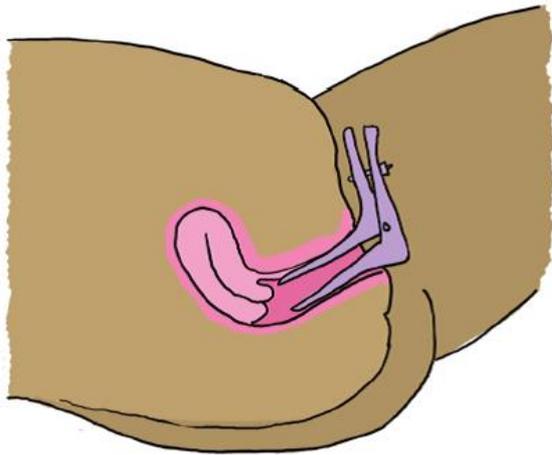
You will go into a private room. The nurse will ask about your health.



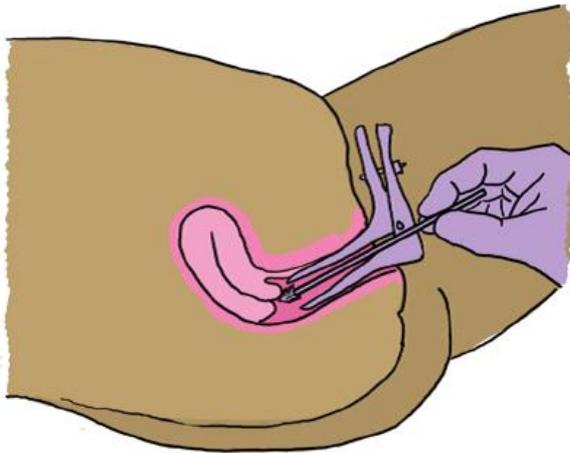
The nurse will then ask you to take your knickers (underwear) off.



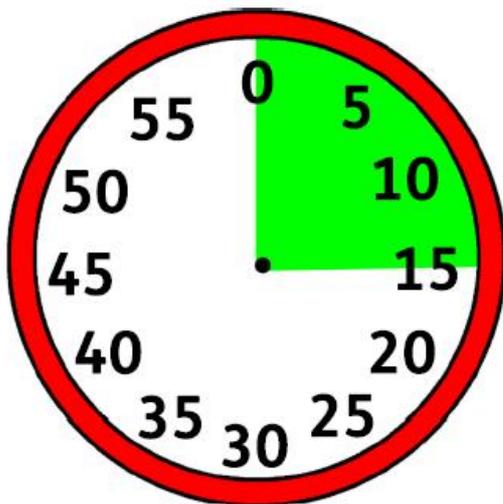
The nurse will ask you to lie down on a bed. You will have a paper sheet over you. This is the time to try to relax.



The nurse will ask you to open your legs. This is so they can put a new, clean plastic or metal speculum inside your vagina. A speculum is a cylinder with a round end that gently opens your vagina. The speculum may feel uncomfortable. If it hurts, tell the nurse to stop.



A small, soft brush is put inside the speculum. It takes a sample of cells from your cervix. This should not hurt.



The speculum is taken out and the test is over. You can leave. The whole visit to the doctor takes 15 minutes at the most.



The sample of cells is tested. You will get a letter with your results in a few weeks. You can talk about your results with your carer, guardian, or learning disability nurse.

Read our EasyRead booklet

If you found this information helpful, you may like our EasyRead booklet. We made it with women with a learning disability. It is about smear tests and it explains:

- what smear tests are
- why they are important
- what cervical cancer is.

Download our EasyRead booklet >

(https://www.jostrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/isl116_18_er_smear_tests_final_low_res.pdf)

How we can help

Lots of people find smear tests confusing and worrying, so you are not alone if you feel this way. If you want to ask questions about having a smear test, you may want to speak to your carer, guardian or learning disability nurse. Or you can call our Helpline (<https://www.jostrust.org.uk/get-support/helpline>) on **0808 802 8000**.

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We're here for you

Talk to someone about how you're feeling, ask an expert or connect with others.

Get support (<https://www.jostrust.org.uk/get-support>)

Date last updated: 13 May 2021

Date due for review: 23 Oct 2021

Did this page help you?

Yes (/information/cervical-screening/cervical-screening-learning-disability?rate=3T8Zq-Klwh_slbG-DSqQI_hgT37P5QyUAxoXfPZaPC4)



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You might also be interested in...

- [What happens at cervical screening? \(/information/cervical-screening/what-happens-during-cervical-screening\)](/information/cervical-screening/what-happens-during-cervical-screening)
- [What is cervical screening? \(/video/what-cervical-screening\)](/video/what-cervical-screening)
- [The Smear Test Film \(/information/videos/smear-test-learning-disabilities\)](/information/videos/smear-test-learning-disabilities)

Charity Information

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