

Helping to prevent **cervical cancer**

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www.screeningservices.org
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This leaflet aims to give you information that could help to prevent cervical cancer. You can reduce your chances of developing cervical cancer by going for cervical screening regularly. Four out of five women in Wales already have regular smear tests.

“All over Wales women are having it.”

If you're between 25 and 64 we will invite you for a smear test every three to five years.

If you are under 25 and have already been invited for screening, we will continue to invite you.

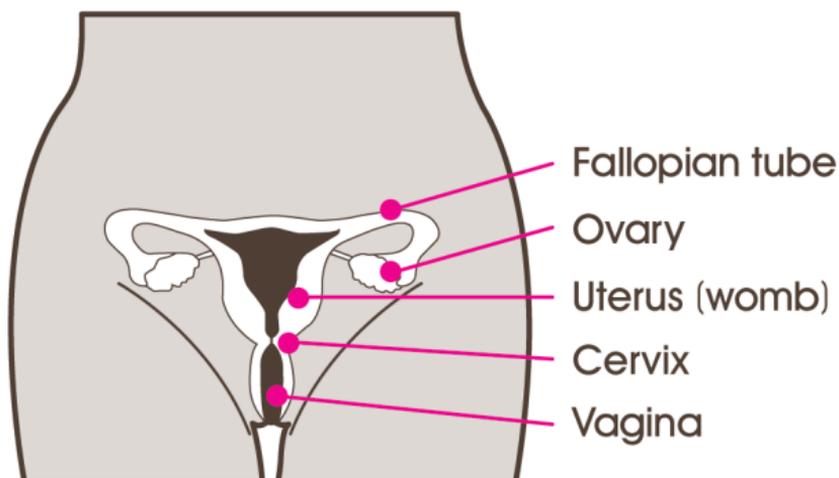
Cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women aged 35 and under, but it can affect women of all ages.

We (**Cervical Screening Wales**) are responsible for the NHS cervical screening programme in Wales.

What you should know

- Cervical screening is known as the 'smear test'.
- The cervical smear is **not** a test for cancer. It aims to prevent cancer from developing, but sometimes it can detect cancer.
- Smear tests look for abnormal changes in cells that are mostly caused by human papilloma viruses (HPVs). Not all strains of HPV cause cancer.
- HPVs that cause cervical cancer are passed on during sexual contact.
- HPVs can cause changes in the cervical cells that may lead to cervical cancer.
- Girls aged 12 to 13 years can have a vaccine to protect against the two most harmful types of HPV.

Where is the cervix?



Your cervix (also known as the 'neck of the womb') is the lower part of your womb (also called a 'uterus'). Your cervix connects with the top end of your vagina.

Cervical cancer

Abnormal cells on your cervix could develop into cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer can spread to other parts of your body, including your womb and bowel.

Some HPVs are the main cause of cervical cancer.

If you smoke, it can increase your risk of developing cervical cancer.

What is a smear test?

Smear tests check the health of your cervix by taking a sample of cells. The test is quick and simple and should not be painful, but some women may find it uncomfortable. If abnormal cells are found, you may need a repeat smear in a few months. In most cases, the abnormal cells will disappear on their own without treatment. Sometimes you may need treatment at a clinic to prevent cervical cancer from developing.

Why go for a smear test?

Going for a smear test regularly can prevent around 75% of cases of cervical cancer from developing, but like any medical test, it is not 100% reliable.

How will the test be taken?

We will invite you when you are due for a smear test. A doctor or practice nurse in your local surgery or sexual-health clinic can carry out the test. The person carrying out the test puts an instrument called a speculum into your vagina to see your cervix. They use a small brush to sample the cells and then send them to a laboratory to be looked at under a microscope.

Who should have a smear?

- We will invite you for a smear test every three years if you are aged between 25 and 49 and every five years if you are aged between 50 and 64.
- If you are under 25 and have already been invited for screening, we will continue to invite you.
- It does not matter whether you are in a same-sex relationship, you should still come for a smear test when we invite you.
- If you have never had sex, you may wish to discuss having a smear test with the person taking the smear test.

The HPV vaccine

The HPV vaccine is available for girls aged 12 to 13 through the School Immunisation Programme. For more information about the vaccine, visit the Beating Cervical Cancer website (see page 7 for details).

Even if you have had the HPV vaccine, it is still important to go for a smear test when you are invited. The vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause most cases of cervical cancer, but not all types.

Cervical cancer is more common in women who:

- do not go for a smear when they are invited;
- have had several sexual partners (or have a sexual partner who has had other sexual partners);
- smoke.

How can a woman help herself?

Early cervical cancer does not always show symptoms so it is important to go for regular smear tests. It is also important to go to the doctor if you have any of the following symptoms, even if you have had a normal smear test result.

- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Bleeding between your periods
- Bleeding or pain during or after sex
- Bleeding after you have gone through menopause

A smear test – **have it.**

**For more information or advice,
visit the following websites:**

Cervical Screening Wales

www.screeningservices.org/csw

NHS Cervical Screening

www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

Jo's Trust

www.jostrust.org.uk

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org

Beating Cervical Cancer

[http://wales.gov.uk/
beatcervicalcancer](http://wales.gov.uk/beatcervicalcancer)

