



## Cervical screenings and HPV

### When was your last cervical screening? Have you been tested for HPV?

Cervical health screening is to check the wellbeing of your cervix by testing for abnormalities. Your cervix is the narrow neck-like passage forming the lower end of the womb.

#### Checking for cervical cancer

According to the National Health Service, tests in 1 in 10 women show changes in the cells of the cervix, which may be caused by many things. Fortunately most of these changes will not lead to cervical cancer.

Though cervical cancer can often be prevented, approximately 1500 women die from it in the UK every year.

Cervical cancer is not limited to any particular age group. National Statistics show that the highest number of cases occur in the 15-39 age group but cases also occur in the 80-99 age range.

#### Testing for infections

Along with checking for abnormalities which may lead to cervical cancer, cervical health screens can also be used to test for commonly sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhoea and Chlamydia, which often occur at the same time, and bacterial yeast infections.

Gonorrhoea is an infection caused by bacteria *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. Some men and women do not experience symptoms and in others, the symptoms may appear 2-5 days after infection or up to a month later. Symptoms include burning/pain while urinating, increased frequency or urgency of urination, discharge, tenderness, fever, sore throat and even arthritis-like symptoms. Complications include infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease, joint infections and heart valve infection.

### Breaksphear offers comprehensive cervical health screens

Breaksphear Medical Group offers a smear test for abnormal cells, gonorrhoea and Chlamydia, together with a check for DNA of the virus responsible for cancer of the cervix, HPV, for £135\*.

As part of each cervical health screen, we also offer a manual breast examination and can advise on self-examination techniques.

Appointments can be booked by telephoning Reception between 9am and 5pm 01442 261 333 Option 3 with one of our specially trained

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Approximately 1500 women die from cervical cancer in the UK every year.

Chlamydia is a disease caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia trachomatis*. While both men and women may have this infection without symptoms, symptoms may include burning sensation while urinating, discharge, tenderness, rectal discharge or pain, and/or pain during intercourse.

Chlamydia has also been linked with infertility, inflammation of the cervix and in men, inflammation of the urethra called urethritis. If a woman is infected while pregnant, Chlamydia may cause infection after delivery and/or possibly cause Chlamydia-related conjunctivitis (eye infection) and pneumonia.

#### Treating identified conditions

Once infections or abnormalities are identified, treatment can begin. Regular cervical health screens can save lives.

As mentioned, some people can be carrying STIs and transmitting without experiencing symptoms. It is therefore very important that sexually active women regularly undergo a full cervical health screen. It is also important that women who are no longer sexually active continue to be screened for cervical cancer.

As well, identifying sexually transmitted infections early can prevent transmission to others. If possible, those who have tested positive are encouraged to recommend former partners go for testing, to determine if they have and are unknowingly transmitting the condition, to prevent further spread of these STIs.

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female medical professionals.

On average, cervical health screens take less than 30 minutes to complete.

From the smear tests performed, it can be determined whether a woman has any abnormalities, including HPV and whether she has any abnormal cells that indicate an early change in the cervix. We will provide guidance and support throughout the programme.

We also offer a high profile vaginal swab that identifies all abnormal vaginal infections such as Candida, trichomonas and others. (This optional swab is an additional £52\*.)

You will be notified of the results in less than 3 weeks. If there are any abnormalities, we will explain how they may affect you and a possible course of treatment.

## We also offer at-home HPV testing kits

In addition to cervical health screens, we also offer at-home HPV testing kits to administer in your own home when it is convenient for you. These test kits are £45 and only test for HPV and therefore are not a replacement for a regular cervical health screen. Results will be available within 2 weeks. To order, you may complete an order form online or available at Reception or contact Pathology 01442 261 333 ext 296. This kit is available to UK residents only. See page 4 of this document for more information.

## More about our cervical health screens

The best time for a cervical health screen is usually two weeks after menstruation.

### Technique used

We use the most advanced technology to collect cervical cells with the Thin Prep PAP Test, which is liquid-based cytology and may not be available through the NHS. We also offer a high-profile vaginal swab which will identify all vaginal infections including Candida, trichomonas and others.

These swabs may be undertaken independently of a screen if desired.

The test we use involves collecting cervical cells in a similar way to the conventional smear. We use only a disposable plastic speculum, which is incinerated after use. There is no risk of cross infection with our single-use speculum.

The procedure should be painless although some patients experience some discomfort. Relaxation exercises can help.

### Breast cancer examination

As part of each cervical health screen, we also offer a manual breast examination and can advise on self-examination techniques. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in England and Wales. According to National Statistics, around 11,500 women died from breast cancer in England and Wales in 2002, a rate of 30 per 100,000 women.

### Accuracy

The NHS states that about 1 in 10 of its smear tests has to be taken again due to a variety of reasons,

including insufficient cells being taken in the sample. Since Breakspear started offering screens in 2003, our experienced medical staff have not had a single unsuccessful sample returned.

The sample is placed in a special container with preservative liquid and sent to a leading independent laboratory for analysis.



### Laboratory analysis

At the microbiology laboratory, specially trained cytoscreeners and cytopathologists analyse your cervical sample. In addition to looking for any cervical cell

changes, these experts are looking for the HPV DNA, which, if present, is detectable and other abnormalities. Most NHS screens are looking only for cervical cell changes and do not investigate for the presence of HPV DNA, which if treated early enough, may prevent the development of cervical cancer.

### Examining results

The results are swiftly returned to Breakspear Medical Group and one of our qualified physicians will then examine the results and advise you accordingly in writing.

If there are infections to deal with, along with prescribing any required medication, we can develop your personalised nutritional programme to achieve and maintain a strong immunity state. Nutrition is important in helping to improve the production of protective mucous membranes and is an effective treatment for many patients with positive HPV DNA smears.

We will provide you with guidance and support throughout the whole programme.

## Frequently asked questions

### My smear was done on the NHS and it was negative. Can I assume that the HPV test was also done?

It is not standard in the NHS cervical health screens to run the HPV test. Unless you were told that the test was completed, the test was not performed. Detecting HPV is important because HPV is the virus that may cause cell abnormalities. Clearing the HPV virus could prevent development of cervical cancer.

### If the HPV is detected, what treatment does Breakspear offer?

In most people, the body's immune system fights the virus before it causes problems. If the results show positive for HPV DNA, we would recommend a programme to improve immunity.

Breakspear has been specialising in building immunity in patients for over two decades. We have means of investigating the body's own resilience and immunity to viruses. Immunity can be improved and maintained in an improved state using nutrition, which is important in raising efficacy of immunity-protecting mucous membranes. We offer treatment programmes to help clear any existing irregularities and can help prevent infections occurring in the future.

Often the HPV test results will become negative after completion of our treatment programme. Should operative treatments be required, which may include a loop or cone biopsy or other operative interventions, we will refer you, with the results and doctor's letter, to a gynaecologist immediately.

### How often should a smear be repeated if a previous smear was negative but HPV was detected?

If the histology is abnormal, HPV tests should be taken every 3 to 6 months. Once the HPV has been cleared, the cervical health screens may resume annually.

### If I have the HPV, can it be cured with treatment or will it just stay dormant in the body?

It is not known for certain if it can be totally cleared but if it is not found in subsequent tests, then permanent preventative nutritional management is recommended.

### Why are there different treatments for positive standard cervical smears?

Specialists may use different treatments such as cone biopsy, hysterectomy or total hysterectomy, because cancer of the cervix can be invasive locally but rarely spreads elsewhere. If the infection is extensive, then operation and perhaps radiotherapy would be advised. In this case, we would refer you with the results and doctor's letter to a gynaecologist immediately.

### What is a colposcopy/cone biopsy?

Colposcopy is an investigation looking into the vagina. Cone biopsy is the removal of a cone-shaped piece of tissue from the cervix. Should operative treatments be required, which may include a loop or cone biopsy or other operative interventions, we will refer you with the results and doctor's letter to a gynaecologist immediately.

### How often should I have a cervical smear if my results are negative? Is once every three years too long between screenings?

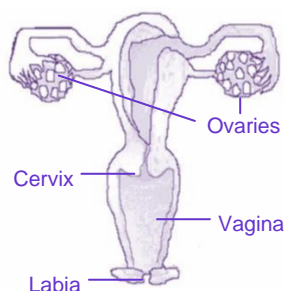
If there is any pain, spotting or bleeding between periods, have a screen completed immediately. If you have a change in partners or unprotected sexual contact, an annual screen is recommended. Under normal circumstances, when a woman is not experiencing any discomfort and is not at risk because of different partners, once every three years is fine.

## More on HPV or genital warts

There are many different types of human papilloma virus (HPV) and the different types are identified by the DNA they contain.

Genital warts caused by HPV are often found in cervical cells as the virus has been incorporated into the DNA, causing cell changes. These changes may be classified into high-risk or low-risk numbers, as determined by a specialist laboratory.

HPV is very common in men and women. In most people, the body's immune system fights off the virus before it causes problems. HPV can be spread person-to-person



through sex or intimate skin-to-skin contact.

Many men are found to have genital wart virus infections of the penis and not all cases have visible warts. A woman's vulnerable area is on the cervix where the soft, columnar cells change into hard squamous (characterised by scales) cells.

HPV can become what is known as "oncogenic", which means 'likely to be cancer-inducing'. If this cell-changing virus is treated and eliminated, the risk of cervical cancer is significantly reduced.

## Testing for HPV at home



We also offer our at-home cervical viral (HPV) testing kit for the price of £45\* and the results will be available to you in less than 14 days.

Breakspear offers a discreet, easy to use at-home HPV testing kit. This is a basic screen that will show whether you have HPV, which can be a precursor to the development of cervical cancer. Detecting and treating HPV early can prevent cervical cancer.

**You can test for HPV at home or at our clinic**

The at-home kit uses a tampon-like swab that you insert when you are not menstruating. The swab stays in for 2 hours and then you remove it and place it in a culture tube. Post the package as soon as you can in the pre-addressed envelope and the results will be returned within 14 days. The results will include a letter that will detail whether or not you tested positive for HPV.

There are many different types of HPV and the different types are identified by the DNA they

contain. With the at-home kit, we are looking for early detection of HPV DNA. (NHS cervical screens do not usually look for this.) Strains of this virus that are considered to be high-risk are: 16, 18, 31, 33 and 45.

If HPV is present, we would likely recommend a full



cervical health screen and further testing to determine high-risk levels for development of cervical cancer.

When HPV becomes aggressive (oncogenic),

the expression of the HPV shows a genetic component called mRNA e6/7, which can be measured.

**Important:** *The at-home kits do not test for Candida, trichomonas and other vaginal abnormalities. These at-home test kits only test for HPV and therefore are not a replacement for a regular cervical health screen. Under normal circumstances, we recommend a comprehensive cervical screen routinely every three years. If you have any irregular bleeding or concerns, an immediate full cervical screen is recommended.*

### For cervical health screening appointments:

Main Reception: +44 (0)1442 261 333 option 3

### To order an at-home HPV testing kit:

Breakspear Pathology: +44 (0)1442 261 333 ext 296



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