

Debunking the myths about cervical screening and cervical cancer



Cervical screening is a test for cancer

Cervical screening is not a test for cervical cancer. It's designed to help prevent cancer by checking for abnormal cell changes caused by HPV (the Human Papilloma Virus), so that they can be monitored or treated early if necessary.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual women don't need cervical screening

Anyone with a cervix, regardless of their sexual orientation, is eligible for cervical screening. This is because HPV (the Human Papilloma Virus), which causes almost all cases of cervical cancer, can be passed on through any type of sexual contact.

Cervical screening is only necessary if you're currently sexually active

HPV can lie undetected in the body for many years without causing problems. However, it can cause cells to change. Attending regular cervical screening can help prevent cervical cancer by checking for abnormalities.

An abnormal cervical screening result means you have cancer

An abnormal test result means there are abnormal cell changes in your cervix, but it doesn't mean you have cancer. It's very rare to be diagnosed with cervical cancer through cervical screening. It is a test to prevent cancer, not detect it. According to Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, less than 1% of people with an abnormal cervical screening result will have cervical cancer.

You don't need to attend cervical screening if you've had the HPV vaccine

Even if you've had the HPV vaccine, cervical screening is still important to help prevent cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine helps to protect against four types of HPV, two of which are the cause of more than 70% of cervical cancers in the UK. However, cervical screening can still pick up cell changes caused by other HPV types early, so you can get the right care or treatment.

Cervical screening is always really painful

Cervical screening can be uncomfortable for some people, but it shouldn't be painful. If you do feel any pain during your test, tell your doctor or nurse. Remember, there are lots of ways to make cervical screening more comfortable. The NHS recommends asking the nurse to use a smaller speculum and bringing something to listen to or read, for example. For more tips, visit Jostrust.org.uk/smeartest.

You don't need to attend cervical screening if you've had the same sexual partner for a long time

Even if you have been with the same person for a while, you're still at risk of cervical cancer as HPV can stay in your body for many years. Cervical screening is therefore still important.



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**MINUTES
THAT MATTER**

**CERVICAL SCREENING
SAVES LIVES**

CERVICAL SCREENING ONLY TAKES **5 MINUTES** AND IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER.

#5MINUTESTHATMATTER

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