

## **PATIENT FACING FAQS SPECIFIC TO NHS CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME CERVICAL SCREENING FAQS FOR PATIENTS DURING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RESPONSE PERIOD**

### **1. I've received an invitation for cervical screening, but I'm having trouble accessing an appointment at my GP practice due to the pressures from coronavirus (COVID-19)**

We know that NHS cervical screening services have been affected in some areas due to the pressures within the NHS to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

The NHS is aiming to provide non-COVID related critical services wherever possible and cervical screening is included in these. Plans are in place for NHS Cervical Screening Programme services to operate normally as soon as it is safe to do so.

Cervical screening aims to prevent cancer. The NHS cervical screening programme looks for the human papillomavirus (HPV) which can cause abnormal cells on the cervix, which in time could develop into cervical cancer (10+ years). Out of 100 people having cervical screening, 87 people have a normal result and are invited back for screening in 3 or 5 years' time.

As cervical cancer develops slowly in the majority of cases, delaying a routine test for a short time is highly unlikely to affect most individual health outcomes.

However, if you are having symptoms such as:

- bleeding between periods, during or after sex, or after the menopause
- changes to vaginal discharge,

It is important to get clinical advice. It does not mean you have cervical cancer. Please call your doctor, even if you have had a normal cervical screening test. Don't wait until you have your next cervical screen.

### **2. How long will cervical screening services be affected for? I'm due my cervical screening, will I receive an invitation?**

The NHS is aiming to provide non-COVID related critical services wherever possible and cervical screening is included in these. Plans are in place for NHS Cervical Screening Programme services to be restored and operate normally as soon as it is safe to do so. Invitation letters will be issued in the forthcoming weeks.

### **3. I have recently attended for cervical screening, due to the current situation, will my sample still be tested?**

If you have had a cervical screening sample taken, we understand the sample will be processed and results issued.

### **5. I've received a follow up appointment from my local colposcopy clinic, can I still attend?**

The NHS is aiming to provide non-COVID related critical services wherever possible and screening services are included in these. Plans are in place for NHS Cervical Screening Programme services to operate normally as soon as it is safe to do so.

If you have received an appointment for colposcopy, they will update you on the latest developments for your area.

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please contact the colposcopy clinic as soon as you can to rearrange. Please be aware that there could be a delay in being put through to the colposcopy service due to the current pressures affecting the system.

### **6. I have recently received an HPV positive cervical screening result, I am waiting to receive a colposcopy appointment, when will this arrive?**

The colposcopy clinic will send you an appointment - this usually happens within 2 weeks of you receiving your screening test result. In light of current pressures relating to COVID-19 this may take longer.

If you are waiting for a follow up colposcopy appointment and haven't received one, please contact the colposcopy clinic directly or alternatively contact your GP practice for further advice.

If you are having any of the following symptoms:

- bleeding between periods, during or after sex, or after the menopause
- changes to vaginal discharge

It does not mean you have cervical cancer, but it is important to get clinical advice. Please call your doctor, even if you have had a normal cervical screening result. Don't wait until your next cervical screening appointment.

For emotional support and advice contact the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline (0808 802 8000) or visit: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus>

### **7. I am due for my cervical screening but I haven't received an invitation**

We are aware that NHS cervical screening services have been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The NHS is aiming to provide non-COVID related critical services wherever possible and screening services are included in these. Plans are in place for NHS Cervical Screening Programme services to operate normally as soon as it is safe to do so. Invitation letters will be issued in the forthcoming weeks.

For further support and advice contact the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline (0808 802 8000) or visit: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus>

### **8. I've had treatment in colposcopy and have been discharged, I'm due to have my follow up cervical screening test, can I still have it?**

We are aware that NHS cervical screening services have been affected in some areas by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The NHS is aiming to provide non-COVID related critical services wherever possible and screening services are included in these. Plans are in place for NHS Cervical Screening Programme services to operate normally as soon as it is safe to do so.

Please be reassured that a short delay to your next test is highly unlikely to cause any harm. If you have any of these symptoms speak to your GP as soon as possible:

- bleeding between periods, during or after sex, or after the menopause
- changes to vaginal discharge

It does not mean you have cervical cancer, but it is important to get clinical advice. Please call your doctor, even if you have had a normal cervical screening result. Don't wait until your next cervical screening appointment.

For emotional support and advice contact the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline (0808 802 8000) or visit: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus>

### **9. My last cervical screening result was inadequate when will I get my repeat test?**

Sometimes it is not possible for a laboratory to give a result. This may be due to a technical problem, for example if the laboratory cannot get a HPV test result from your sample or cannot see if abnormal cells are present or not.

The person who took your test will be able to tell you why the laboratory could not give a result. We know that it can be worrying if you haven't had a result and want to get your test repeated.

The NHS is aiming to provide non-COVID related critical services wherever possible and screening services are included in these. Plans are in place for NHS Cervical Screening Programme services to be restored and operate normally as soon as it is safe to do so.

If you have any of these symptoms speak to your GP as soon as possible:

- bleeding between periods, during or after sex, or after the menopause
- changes to vaginal discharge

It does not mean you have cervical cancer, but it is important to get clinical advice. Don't wait until your next cervical screening appointment.

For further support and advice contact the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline (0808 802 8000) or visit: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus>

**10. Will I get another letter to remind me to make an appointment for cervical screening?**

If you have had an invitation letter to make an appointment for cervical screening and a sample is not received at the laboratory, you will be sent a reminder letter at a later date.

**11. I'm having some symptoms and want a cervical screen, how can I get one?**

It is important to remember that cervical screening is not a test for investigating symptoms. Screening looks for the human papillomavirus (HPV) which can cause abnormal cells on the cervix, which in time could develop into cervical cancer (10+ years).

If you have any of these symptoms speak to your GP as soon as possible:

- bleeding between periods, during or after sex, or after the menopause
- changes to vaginal discharge

It does not mean you have cervical cancer, but it is important to get clinical advice. Please call your doctor, even if you have had a normal cervical screening result. Don't wait until your next cervical screening appointment.

For further support and advice contact the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline (0808 802 8000) or visit: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus>

**12. My cervical screening result 12 months ago showed I have HPV and I'm now due a repeat test – I'm worried that my appointment will be delayed and the HPV might still be there.**

HPV is a common virus and most people will have it at some point in their life without knowing. If HPV is detected, cervical screening is repeated in 12 months to see if the virus is still present. In most cases, the virus will go away on its own and cells on the cervix will still be normal.

If you have any of these symptoms speak to your GP as soon as possible:

- bleeding between periods, during or after sex, or after the menopause
- changes to vaginal discharge

It does not mean you have cervical cancer, but it is important to get clinical advice. Please call your doctor, even if you have had a normal cervical screening result. Don't wait until your next cervical screening appointment.

For further support and advice contact the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline (0808 802 8000) or visit: <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/coronavirus>