



ECCA

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

The ECCA supports the reduction of cervical cancer in Europe by promoting awareness of cervical cancer and the means by which it can be prevented. Drawing upon the expertise of researchers, clinicians and public health organisations from across Europe, the ECCA has prepared:

The leaflets

- Cervical cancer screening
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and cervical cancer
- Follow-up and treatment of an abnormal cervical smear

The booklets

- Everything you need to know to help you avoid cervical cancer
- Everything you need to know if you have an abnormal cervical smear

For additional information

📄 Visit our website: www.ecca.info

✉ Send your questions to: info@ecca.info

- Cervical cancer develops in the cervix, the part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It occurs when cells of the cervix become abnormal and start to grow in an uncontrolled fashion.
- Cervical screening is designed to find abnormal cervical cells in the early stages when they can be easily removed so they do not develop into cervical cancer. Cervical screening is currently done using the cervical smear test.
- All women from 20 to 60 years of age should be screened once every 3 years.
- Vaccination is now available to reduce the risk of cervical cancer, but it will not eliminate need for screening. Together, screening and vaccination will offer the most effective protection against cervical cancer.

- What is cervical cancer?
- Why get screened?
- Who should be screened?
- What do you need to do?
- How does screening work?
- Normal cervical smear result?
- Abnormal cervical smear result?
- Is screening reliable?

CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING

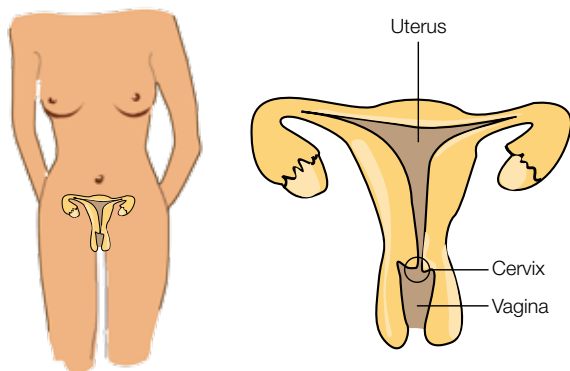
terra/erde Photos : Getty Image / Stockbyte L1_EN_SC_A



What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer develops in the cervix, the part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It occurs when cells of the cervix become abnormal and start to grow in an uncontrolled fashion.

It takes many years for abnormal cells in the early stages to progress to cervical cancer. Fortunately, these stages are easy to treat. However, they show no obvious signs and can only be found by screening.



Why get screened?

Cervical screening is designed to find abnormal cervical cells in the early stages when they can be removed so they do not develop into cervical cancer. Once cancer has developed, treatment becomes much more difficult and less successful.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is caused by certain types of HPV. There are more than 100 types of HPV and about 15 of these can cause cervical cancer.

Most adults will have had a HPV infection at some time in their lives, but it usually disappears on its own without any problem. If the HPV does not disappear, it can increase the risk of cervical cancer developing.

Who should be screened?

All women from 20 to 60 years of age should be screened once every 3 years.

You can stop screening at the age 60 if you have been regularly screened since you were 50 and have not had any recent abnormal results.

What do you need to do?

If you are registered with a GP, you should receive a letter when it is time for you to have your cervical smear.

If it has been more than five years since your last smear, contact your GP to make sure that you are registered. You will then need to make an appointment; this should be at the middle of your menstrual cycle, about 2 weeks after the end of your last period.

When you call to book, they will tell you what you need to do to prepare. In general, you should avoid using any treatments inside your vagina for 2 days before your appointment and avoid having sex the night before.

How does screening work?

Cervical screening is done using the cervical smear test which is taken at your GP practice or family planning clinic. This is a simple procedure that only takes about ten minutes and involves little more than a vaginal examination. During the examination, a sample of cells will be taken from your cervix using a small spatula or brush.



Vaccination is now available to protect women against the 2 most common types of HPV, types 16 & 18, which cause about 2/3rds of all cervical cancers and many abnormal Pap tests. The current vaccines will be most effective if given before you have had HPV 16 or 18, and they will not effectively protect against all HPV types. Therefore, even if you have been vaccinated, you should still be screened. Together, screening and vaccination will offer the most effective protection against cervical cancer.



These cells will be sent to the laboratory, where they will be examined under a microscope to search for any abnormal cervical cells.

Normal cervical smear result?

Most women will have a normal result.

In this case, your risk for cervical cancer is low and you should continue your regular screening.

Abnormal cervical smear result?

Some women will have an abnormal result. This simply means that some abnormal cervical cells have been found on the cervical smear test; it is very rare for cancer to be detected.

Depending on the result, you will be advised to have one of the following:

- another cervical smear in three to six months
- a colposcopy, which is a procedure that allows the doctor to examine your cervix more closely.

Certain abnormalities should be removed so that they will not develop into cancer. This usually requires only a simple procedure that can be done in the hospital gynaecology outpatient clinic. Treatment rarely affects your sex life or ability to have children.

Is screening reliable?

No screening test is perfect and the cervical smear test may miss some cases of disease. This is why you need to be screened regularly, so that anything that has been missed on one screen may be picked-up at the next, before it has time to progress.

High-quality, organised screening programs are very effective, but will not prevent all cervical cancers.