

# Understanding HPV and Cervical Screening:

## For people who are not sexually active

### Do I need cervical screening if I'm not sexually active?

If you are NOT sexually active the chance of developing cervical cancer is very low. This is not “no risk, only very low risk.”



### Here's why:

- ✓ Having sex can mean different things to different people, not just sexual intercourse.
- ✓ You can get HPV from any form of intimate sexual contact.
- ✓ Even without penetrative sex, HPV can spread through touching, sharing sex toys, vaginal, anal, oral sex or genital skin-to-skin contact.
- ✓ Some people contract HPV from their first sexual experience or past partners.
- ✓ You do not need to have sexual contact with a lot of people to get HPV. You can get HPV from your first sexual experience or past partners.

## What is Human Papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV (Human Papillomavirus) is a very common virus. HPV lives on the skin in and around the genital area, so condoms don't protect you from it. Most people will get some type of HPV in their life, often without knowing it. Some types of HPV can cause changes to the cervix that may lead to cervical cancer. HPV vaccines are offered to young people in school (around 11-13 years old). If you haven't been vaccinated and you're under 25, you can contact the Vaccination Enquiries Team at [loth.vaccenquiries@nhs.scot](mailto:loth.vaccenquiries@nhs.scot) or by calling 0300 790 6296.

## What is cervical screening?

Cervical screening (sometimes called a smear test) is a preventive test, to check for the presence of HPV. Screening is offered routinely every 5 years to all women and anyone with a cervix aged 25-64 years, even if you feel healthy and are not sexually active.

The cervix is the opening between the vagina and the womb (uterus). Sometimes called the neck of the womb.

Regular cervical screening tests are important even if you have had the HPV vaccine or are not sexually active.

The screening invitation will be posted to your home address. The test is usually done at your GP practice by appointment with the Practice Nurse.

Registering with a GP practice and keeping your contact details up to date every time you move address will ensure that your screening invitation and results will reach you.

## How to decide about cervical screening if you are not sexually active



- It is recommended to talk to a nurse or GP.#
- After that discussion, you may choose to delay or decline screening.
- It's good to be informed for the future.

## Support available for cervical screening

### Extra Support

If you are worried about attending for screening you can speak to the Practice Nurse and they can help to answer your questions. Support that can be provided includes:

- a longer appointment
- a visit to the clinic beforehand to see the equipment, get comfortable and talk through the process
- You can also bring someone with you for support.

### Interpreter

If you need an interpreter, please contact your GP practice in advance and tell them your preferred language.

### Special Arrangements

If you require any special arrangements for any disabilities, please contact your GP practice.

## More information

**More information about cervical screening is available** on the [Health Screening NHS Lothian](https://services.nhslothian.scot/healthscreening/) website with resources provided in multiple languages and accessible formats:

<https://services.nhslothian.scot/healthscreening/>



This video explains why cervical cancer screening is still important, even if you have had the HPV vaccine – [What's the link between the HPV vaccine and cervical screening? \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOqq3OQg9dY):

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**Be aware of your body – look out for changes - if concerned, contact your GP. For more information, please visit [Cervical cancer | NHS inform Signs and symptoms of cervical cancer](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/cervical-cancer/#symptoms-of-cervical-cancer):**

[www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/cervical-cancer/#symptoms-of-cervical-cancer](https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/cervical-cancer/#symptoms-of-cervical-cancer)

