



**Staffordshire and  
Stoke-on-Trent**  
Integrated Care System

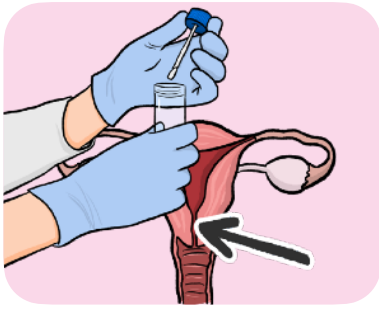
# Smear tests

Understanding cervical cancer and  
smear tests



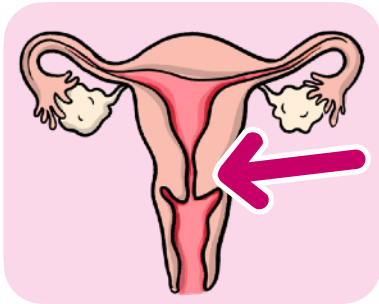
**Easy  
Read**

## About this leaflet



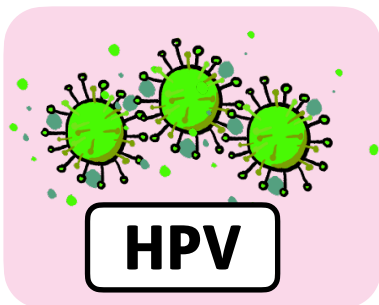
This leaflet is about **smear tests**.

A **smear test** is when a doctor does a test to check whether you may have **cervical cancer**.



**Cervical cancer** is a type of cancer that starts in your cervix, which is between your uterus and your vagina.

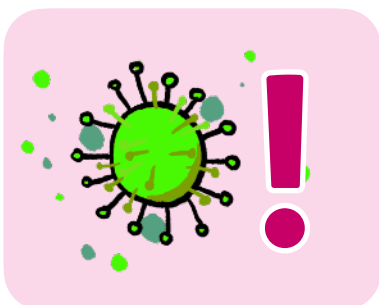
## About cervical cancer



Cervical cancer is usually caused by a group of viruses known as HPV.



HPV is passed from 1 person to another through sex.

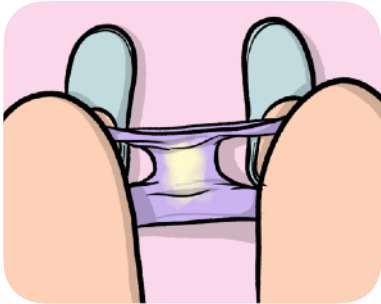


Only harmful HPV can lead to cervical cancer.

Signs of cervical cancer include:



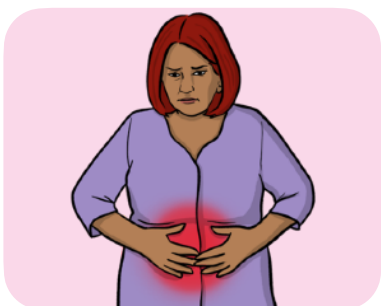
- Bleeding from your vagina at a time that is unusual for you, like when you are not on your period.



- Changes to your normal **discharge**.  
**Discharge** is the name for wetness or liquid that comes out of the vagina.



- Feeling pain during sex.



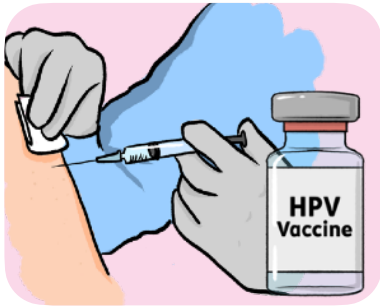
- Feeling pain in your lower back or lower tummy.



If you have any signs of cervical cancer, you should speak to your doctor about them.

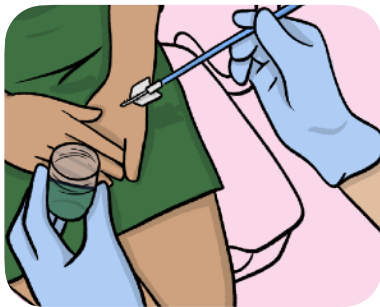
# Protecting yourself from cervical cancer

The best ways to protect yourself from getting cervical cancer are:



## 1. Getting the HPV **vaccine**.

A **vaccine** is a jab that helps to stop you from being ill with a certain illness.



## 2. Going to your smear tests.

# About smear tests



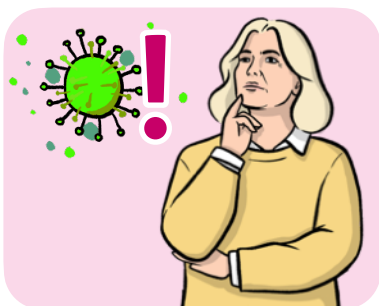
Your GP practice will send you a letter inviting you to have a smear test.



You will be invited to have your first smear test just before you turn 25.



If you are aged between 25 and 64, you will be invited to have a smear test every 5 years.

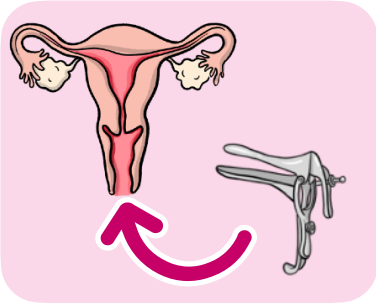


If you are older than 64, you will only be invited to have a smear test if your past tests showed signs of harmful HPV.



You can also book your smear test yourself. You just need to contact your GP practice.

# At your smear test



1. A doctor or nurse will gently place a small tool into your vagina.



2. The doctor or nurse will then use a soft brush to take a tiny sample of cells from your cervix.

This sample of cells is checked for harmful HPV.



Smear tests usually take around 5 minutes or less.

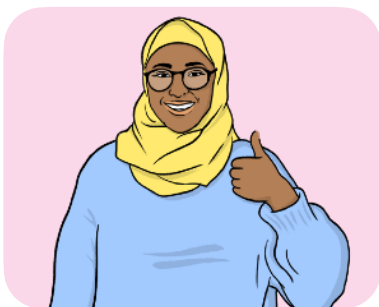


You may be nervous, but do not worry. Most people do not find smear tests painful, only a little uncomfortable.

# After your smear test



You will get a letter that explains the results of your smear test.



If no harmful HPV is found, you do not need any more tests until your next smear test.

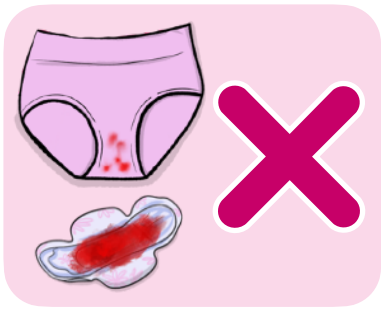


If harmful HPV is found, you will be invited to another test to understand more about the issue.



Harmful HPV does not always mean you have cervical cancer.

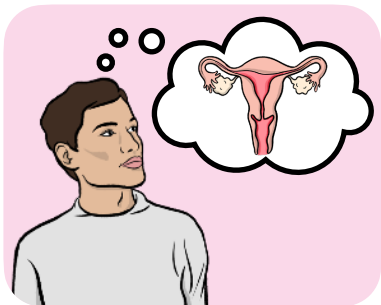
## Other information



It is best to have your smear test when you are **not** on your period.



You should still go to your smear tests even if you have never had sex.



You should still go to your smear tests even if you no longer describe yourself as a woman.

If you have a cervix, you should still go.



For more information, please contact your GP practice or a sexual health service.