

# Getting your cervical screening results

Waiting for cervical screening (smear test) results may make you feel anxious. Most of us will have clear results, and about 1 in 20 will have an abnormal result.

It is extremely rare for cervical cancer to be diagnosed from cervical screening. Only about 1 in 2,000 (less than 1%) people with an abnormal cervical screening result will have cervical cancer.

## **How long will it take to get my results?**

You should get your cervical screening (smear test) results within 2 weeks after your test, but it can take longer. The time between having cervical screening and getting your results can also vary depending on where you live. At your appointment, ask your nurse how long it will take to get your results and how you will get them.

Getting your results early or later does not affect what the result is, so try not to worry.

## **How will I get my results?**

You should always get your results letter in the post. If you don't get a letter within the timeframe your GP surgery gave you, ring them.

If your sample needed further investigation or you need more tests, the hospital may contact you with your results.

## **What do my cervical screening results mean?**

This depends on where you live and what type of testing is being done on your sample.

### **If you live in an area where your sample is looked at for cell changes (cytology):**

#### *Normal*

A normal result means your sample was looked at for changes to the cells (abnormalities) and none were found. You will usually be invited for cervical screening again in 3 or 5 years, depending on your age.

#### *Inadequate*

You may need to repeat the test after 3 months because the first one couldn't be read properly. This may be because the sample didn't have enough cells, the cells couldn't be seen clearly or there was an infection.

#### *Abnormal*

An abnormal result may show borderline or low-grade cell changes (dyskaryosis). These changes are very close to being normal and may disappear without treatment. In some areas of England and in Northern Ireland, your same sample will be tested for high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) if these changes are seen. Your letter will tell you what to do:

- If no HPV is found, you can go back to normal (routine) screening.
- If HPV is found, you will be invited to colposcopy where an expert will take a closer look at your cervix.

An abnormal result may show high-grade (moderate or severe) dyskaryosis. This means you will be invited to colposcopy, where an expert will take a closer look at your cervix.

**If you live in an area where your sample is first tested for high-risk HPV:**

*HPV result unavailable or unreliable*

This means that a true result could not be given. Usually you need to have the test repeated after three months.

*No HPV found (HPV negative)*

If you don't have high-risk HPV, your sample won't be tested for cell changes (abnormalities) as it is very unlikely you would have or develop them. You will be invited for cervical screening again in 3 or 5 years, depending on your age.

*HPV found (HPV positive) but inadequate*

You usually you need to repeat the test after 3 months because the first one couldn't be read properly. This may be because the sample didn't have enough cells, or the cells could not be properly seen.

*HPV found (HPV positive) but no cell changes found*

Your immune system usually gets rid of HPV. You will be invited for cervical screening again in 1 year, to check that the HPV is gone.

If you have 3 HPV positive results in a row, you will be invited to colposcopy.

*HPV found (HPV positive) and cell changes found*

Changes to the cells may be:

- borderline or low-grade changes (dyskaryosis)
- moderate or severe (high-grade) dyskaryosis.

If you have any grade of cell changes and HPV, you will be invited to colposcopy. This is where an expert takes a closer look at your cervix.