

A smear test

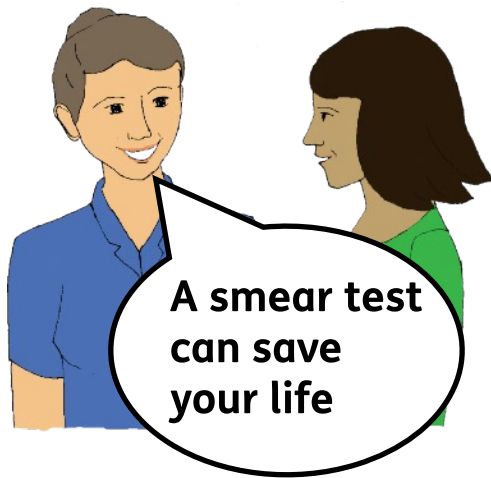
What is it?



Jo's cervical
cancer trust

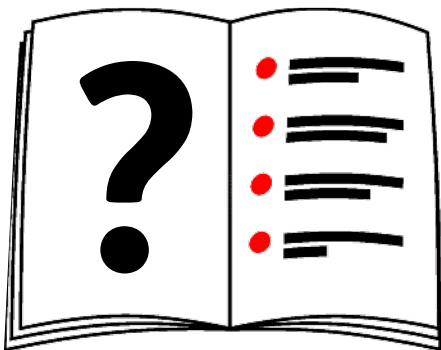


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A smear test could stop you getting cervical cancer.



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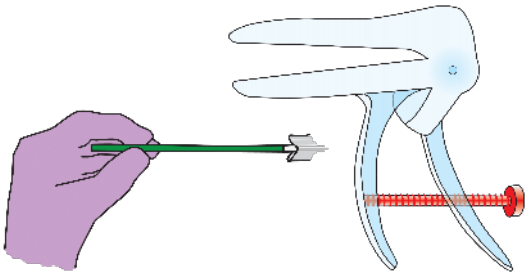
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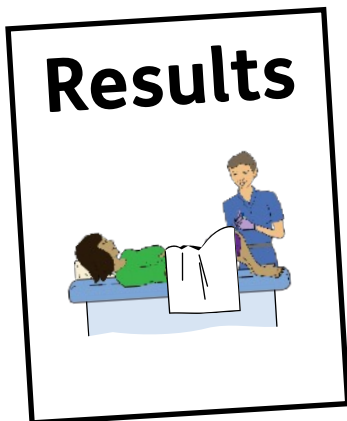
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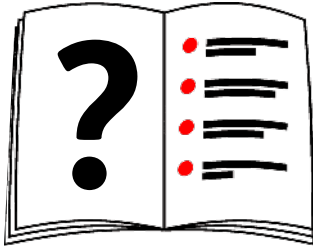
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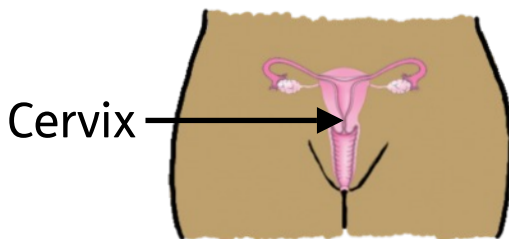


What some of the words mean



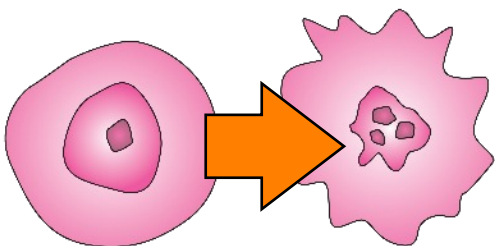
Here are some words that your doctor, nurse or carer may use. We will explain what the words mean.

Cervix



In this booklet, we talk about your **cervix**. The cervix is inside your body at the top of your vagina. You cannot see it.

Cancer



Your body is made of small parts called cells. **Cancer** is a disease that can happen when some cells inside your body go bad. It can be serious and make you very ill.



There are different types of cancer. Some people can be cured of cancer, especially if it is found early.

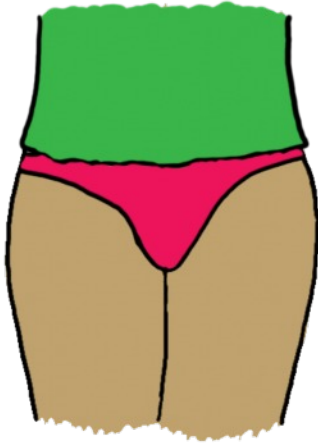


Vagina

People use different words for their **vagina** like:

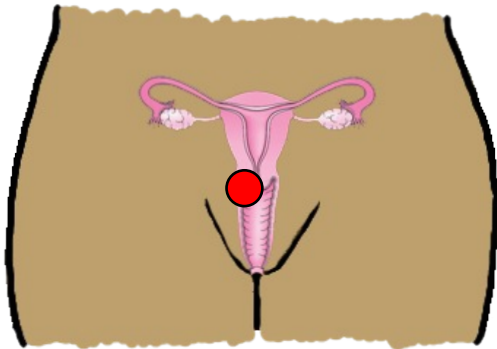
- front bottom
- down below
- private parts
- fanny
- flower
- foof.

In this booklet, we say **vagina**.



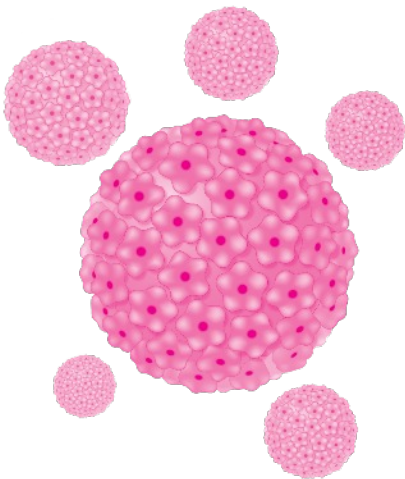
Underwear

In this booklet, we say **pants**.



Cervical cancer

A **cancer** in your **cervix**.

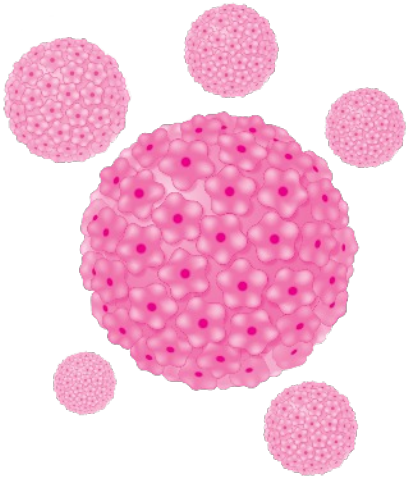


HPV

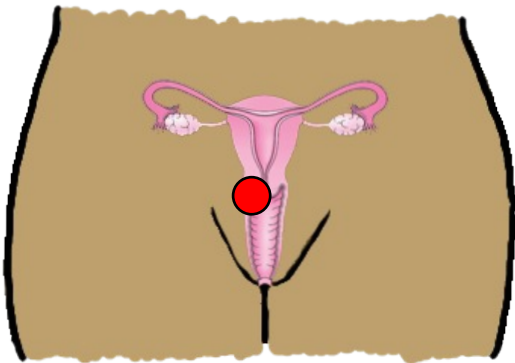
HPV is a virus, like a cold. You get HPV from other people. Its full name is human papillomavirus. Here we will always call it **HPV**.



Most men and women get HPV. Usually, HPV is not a problem. You might not know you have it.



There are lots of different types of HPV.



For a very small number of women, some types of HPV can cause cervical cancer.



Men and women can get HPV by:

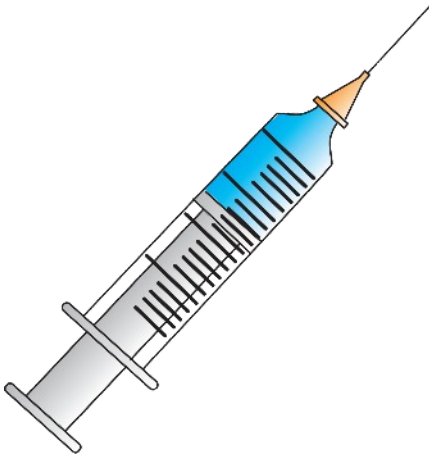
- having sex



- touching each other in the genital area

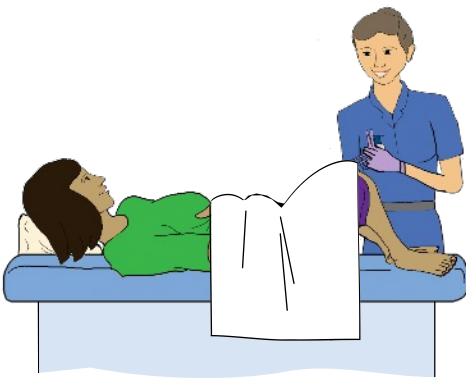


- sharing sex toys with each other.

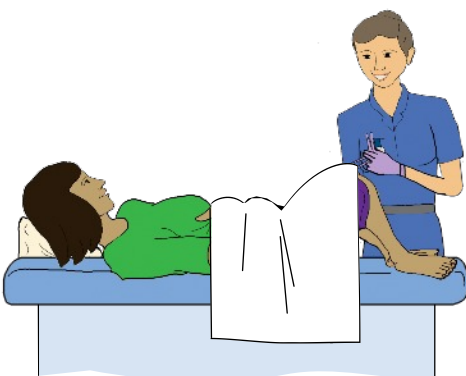


HPV vaccine

This is a jab, like a flu jab. It is given to teenage girls and boys to help stop them getting some types of HPV.

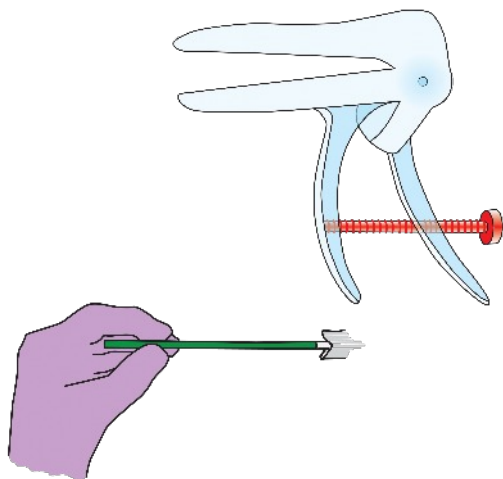


When you're aged 25 and when you're older you'll still need a smear test, even if you've had the **HPV vaccine**.



Smear test

A smear test is sometimes called cervical screening. Here we will always call it a **smear test**.



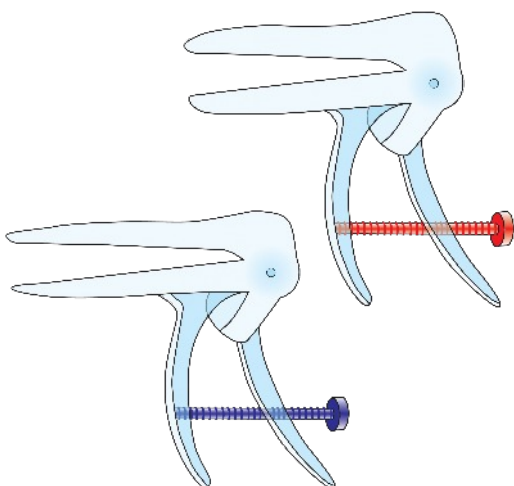
A smear test checks for HPV. If you have HPV it doesn't mean you have cervical cancer.

If you have HPV, the cells in your cervix will be checked to make sure they're healthy.



Finding changes in your cells early can help stop cervical cancer.

Speculum



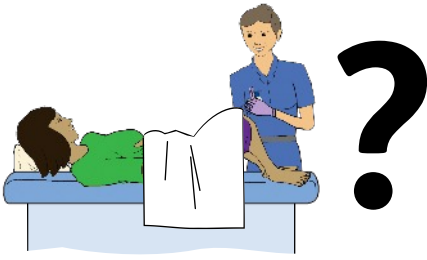
When you have a smear test, your nurse needs to see your cervix. They use a **speculum** made of plastic to gently open your vagina.

Speculums are available in different sizes to suit your body.

Brush



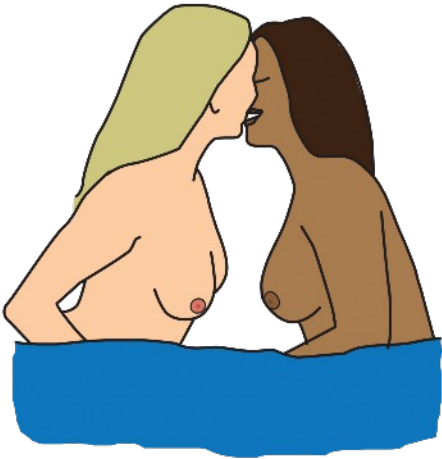
When you have a smear test, your nurse uses a small **brush** to take cells from your cervix.



Do you need a smear test?



Women are asked to go for smear tests from age 25 to age 64.



Any woman who has had sex with a man or a woman should think about having a smear test.

This means:



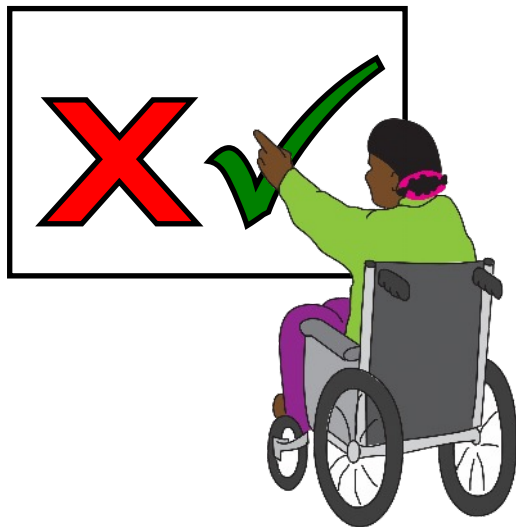
- anyone who has had any kind of sex
 - vaginal sex
 - anal sex
 - oral sex



- any kind of sexual touching



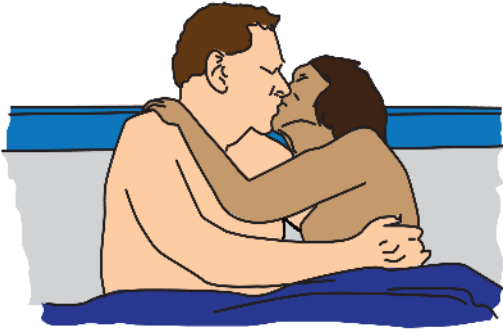
- if you have used a sex toy with someone else.



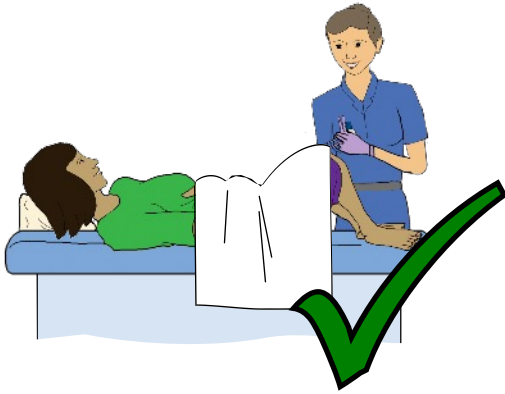
Even if you have never had any kind of sex or touching in the genital area, you can still go for a smear test. It is your choice. A smear test can help stop cervical cancer.



Any person with a cervix can go for a smear test. This means if you were born female but now don't identify as a woman you can still go for a smear test.



You can get HPV after having sex just once. You can also get it after being touched by someone in the genital area or sharing sex toys just one time.



Cervical cancer usually grows really slowly, so a smear test can often stop cervical cancer from developing.



Why is having a smear test important?



Having a smear test saves thousands of women's lives every year. Women with a learning disability should consider going for a smear test.



If someone says you don't need a smear test because you have a learning disability, **this is not true.**



Parents and carers, and doctors and nurses might not know if you have had sex or if you have been touched by someone else in the genital area before. This means they won't know if you might have HPV.



You should decide if you want to go for a smear test. You can talk to your parent or carer, or someone you trust about it if you want to.



Your rights



You can have a smear test if you are aged between 25 – 64 years.



You will get a letter asking you to book your smear test.

5 Years			
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec



If you're aged 25 or over and have never had a letter about going for a smear test, or if it's been longer than 5 years since your last letter, you can phone your doctor or nurse to ask them about it.



If you don't feel comfortable phoning your nurse or doctor, you can ask a trusted person to phone them for you.



You must tell the receptionist at your GP practice if you change your address so you can still get your letter.



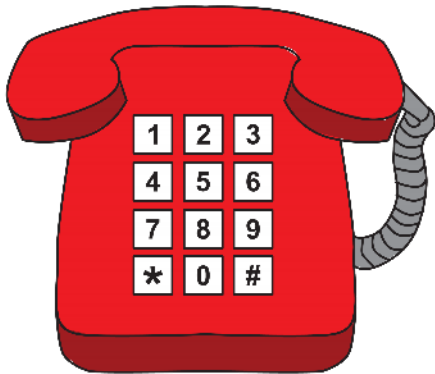
No one can make you have a smear test. You have the right to say no.



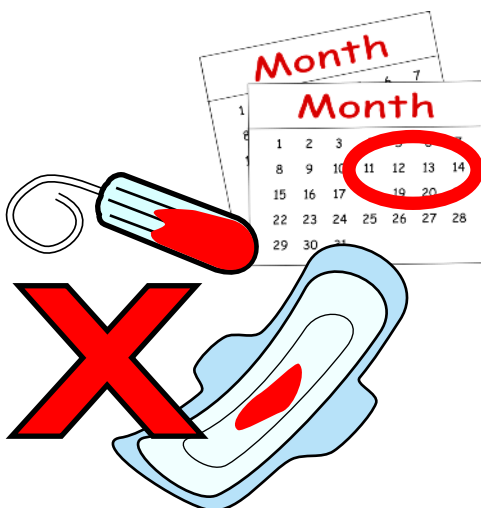
What happens during a smear test?



You get a letter asking you to go to your doctors for a smear test.



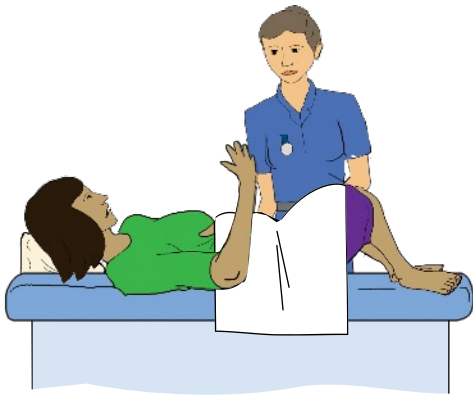
You need to phone your GP practice to make an appointment for your smear test. You can ask someone you trust to do this if it is hard for you to use a phone.



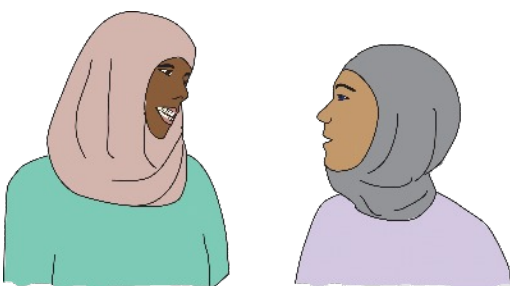
It is easier to have the test on a day that is not your period, so try to book an appointment for when you are not bleeding.



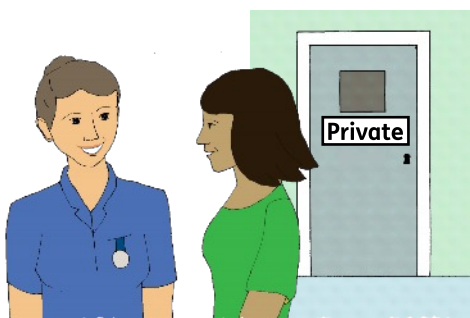
A nurse usually does the smear test. You can ask for a female nurse to do your test when you book your appointment.



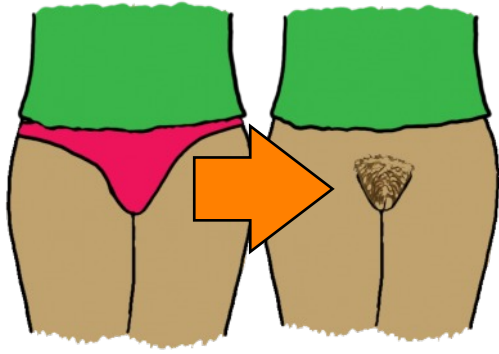
If the test hurts or if you find it too uncomfortable, tell your nurse. It is important to tell them if you are feeling pain. You can stop the test at any time if you want to.



You can ask for a friend to be with you during the test. They can stay in the waiting area or they can be in the room with you during the test.



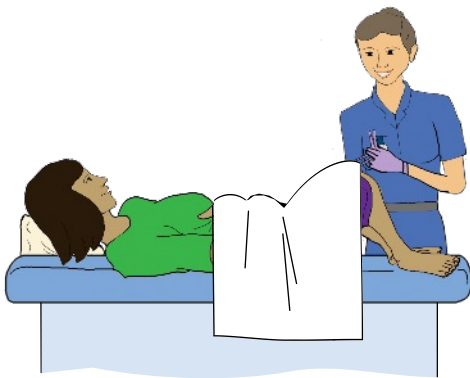
You will go into a private room. The nurse will ask about your health.



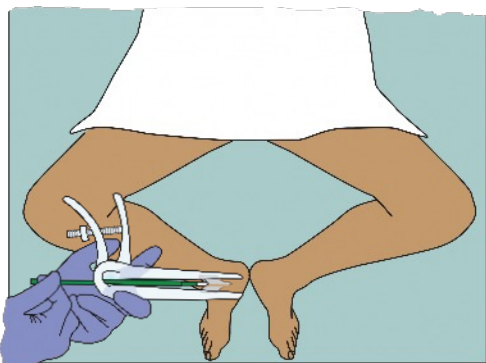
Then they will ask you to go behind a curtain so you have privacy, and take your pants off.



The nurse will ask you to lie down on a bed and put a sheet over your private area so you are covered up.



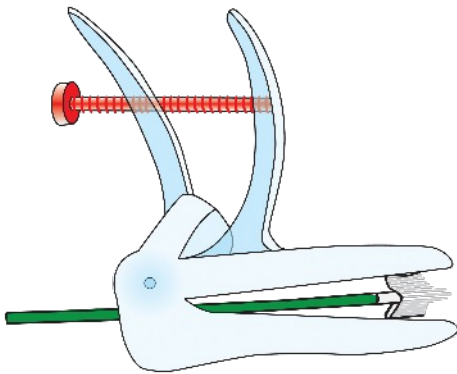
When you are ready you can tell the nurse and they will come behind the curtain. This is the time to try to relax.



They will ask you to bend your knees upwards so your feet are flat on the bed. Then they'll ask you to open your legs so they can insert the speculum into your vagina.

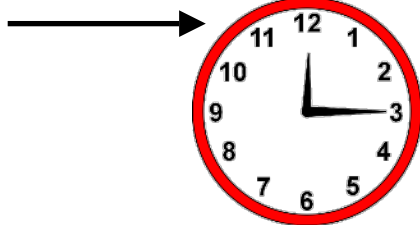


The speculum may feel uncomfortable. If it hurts, tell the nurse to stop.



The brush is put inside the speculum. It takes a sample of cells from your cervix. This should not hurt.

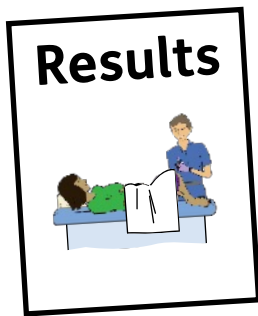
15 minutes



The speculum and brush are taken out and the test is over. The test will only take a couple of minutes. The whole visit to the doctor takes about 15 minutes.



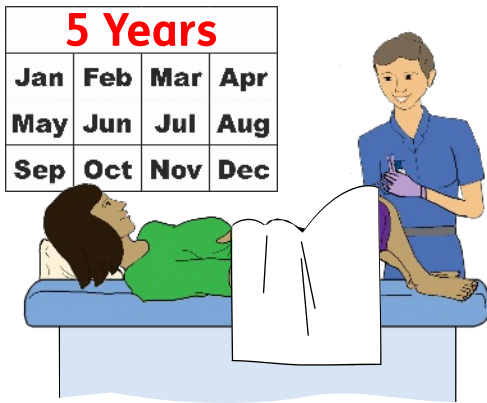
The sample of cells is then sent to a laboratory where they are tested for HPV.



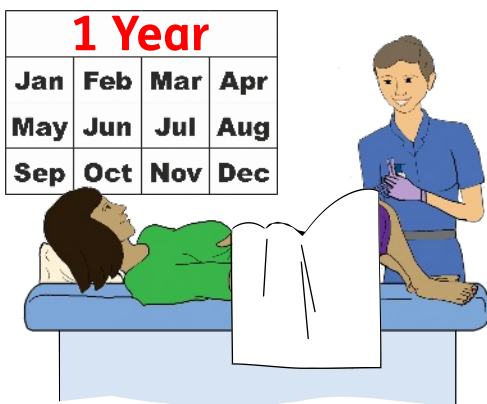
Smear test results



You will get a letter with your results a few weeks after your test.



If there is no HPV found, you have a normal smear test result and you will be invited for another smear test in 5 years time.



If HPV was found in your body, but your cells are healthy then you don't need to do anything just now. You will be invited back for another smear test in about 1 year to check if the HPV has gone away.



If HPV was found and the cells in your cervix have changed, you will get an appointment to go to the hospital for more tests. This does not mean you have cancer. It's important to go for these tests so the doctor can decide the best thing to do to keep you healthy.



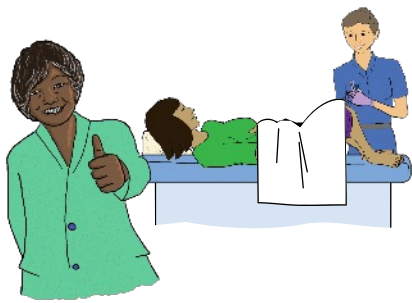
If you need to go to the hospital, the results letter will tell you what to do.



You can talk about your results with your carer, friends, or learning disability nurse. Or you can call Jo's on **0808 802 8000**. All calls to Jo's are private.



If you do have cervical cancer, finding it early means you are more likely to get better.



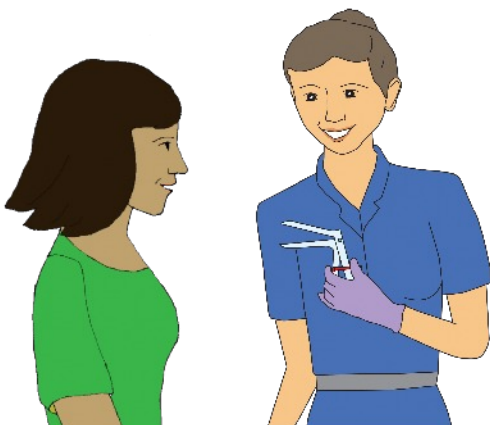
Tips to make a smear test as easy as it can be



1. Find out as much as you can about what happens during a smear test. It might be helpful to read this booklet and your letter with someone else. They can help explain it to you.



2. Talk about what happens at a smear test with friends, family, your learning disability nurse or other people you trust.



3. Before your appointment, you can ask to speak to the nurse about going for a smear test. You can tell the nurse if you feel unsure or scared. You can ask the nurse to show you the room and the equipment they use before you have the test done.



4. Take a friend. Having someone you trust with you can help. Lots of women do this, so do not be scared to ask.



5. If you want to wear trousers, you will need to take them off during the test. If you want to wear a skirt or dress, you can keep it on and just lift it up.



6. If you feel worried about having a smear test you can tell the nurse. They will answer any questions you have and will help you to feel relaxed.



7. Take your mind off the smear test by doing some breathing exercises, listening to music, or anything else that helps.



7. If the smear test hurts, say straight away.



8. If you have any questions about going for a smear test or HPV, you can ask your nurse or doctor. You can also phone Jo's on **0808 802 8000** and we will be happy to talk to you.

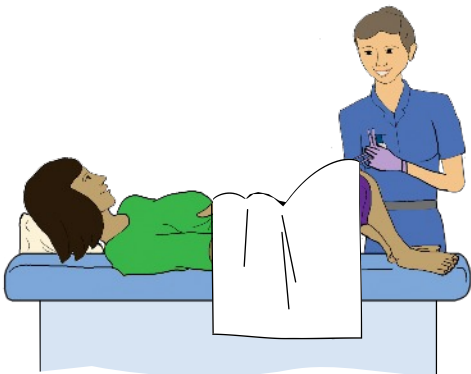
How we made this booklet



We worked with the charity, Enable, and women with learning disabilities to make this booklet. We asked them what the booklet should say and how it should look.



We also asked health experts who know about smear tests to make sure the booklet is correct.



We would like to thank all these people for helping us make this booklet. We hope it helps you learn more about smear tests.



This booklet has been written by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust.

We are a charity that gives people information about smear tests, HPV, cell changes and cervical cancer.



If you have questions, call us on: **0808 802 8000.**

We will listen to your worries and give you information you can trust.



We would like to know what you think about this booklet. If you want to tell us, you can do our survey. It takes a couple of minutes and you don't need to give your name.



You can do the survey by going to this webpage:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JosEasyread>



You can also scan the QR code with the camera on a mobile phone.



This paper has been designed and produced for Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust by the EasyRead service at Inspired Services Publishing Ltd. Ref ISL173 23. November 2023.

www.inspiredservices.org.uk



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Call our Helpline:

0808 802 8000

Visit our website:

www.jostrust.org.uk

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