

Reducing Your Risk of Cervical Cancer

Attend cervical screening when invited

Regular screening is the best way to detect changes before they develop into cancer.

Have the HPV vaccination

The HPV vaccine helps protect against the types of HPV most commonly linked to cervical cancer. The vaccine is routinely offered to children and young people and provides excellent protection.

If you are under 25 and missed HPV vaccination, please contact the GHA at 20007962 or email child.welfare@gha.gi

Practise safer sex

Using condoms can reduce the risk of HPV transmission and help protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Condoms do not provide complete protection against HPV, but they can reduce the risk.

Do not smoke

Smoking makes it harder for your body to clear HPV infection and increases the risk of abnormal cervical cell changes. Stopping smoking can significantly reduce your risk of cervical cancer.

Symptoms of Cervical Cancer

Cervical screening aims to detect problems before symptoms develop.

Please contact your GP if you experience:

- Bleeding after sex
- Bleeding between periods
- Bleeding after the menopause
- Unusual vaginal discharge
- Pain during sex
- Persistent pelvic pain

These symptoms do **not** always mean cancer, but they should be assessed by a healthcare professional.

Remember cervical screening saves lives

Regular cervical screening can identify HPV and early cell changes before cancer develops, allowing treatment at an early stage and improving outcomes. It is one of the most effective ways to prevent cervical cancer.



A guide to cervical screening and cervical cancer prevention

Anyone with a cervix should attend cervical screening when invited, even if they feel well and have no symptoms.

What is cervical cancer?

The cervix is the lower part of the womb (uterus), also known as the "neck of the womb."

Cervical cancer develops when cells in the cervix grow abnormally and uncontrollably. If left untreated, these abnormal cells can develop into cancer and may eventually spread to other parts of the body.

What causes cervical cancer?

Certain types of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) cause almost all cases of cervical cancer.

HPV is a very common virus that most people will be exposed to at some point in their lives. It is spread through intimate skin-to-skin contact, including sexual activity.

In most people, the immune system clears HPV without causing any problems. However, in some people HPV persists and can cause changes in cervical cells. These changes can sometimes develop into cervical cancer if not detected and treated.

There are many different types of HPV. Only some types are linked to cervical cancer.

What is a cervical screening test (smear test)?

A cervical screening test is a simple procedure used to check for certain types of HPV. It allows us to identify people with a cervix who may be at higher risk of developing cervical cancer, before cancer develops.

What happens during a cervical screening test?

A trained smear taker, such as a nurse or doctor, will:

1. Ask you to lie on an examination couch.
2. Gently insert a speculum into the vagina so that the cervix can be seen.
3. Use a small soft brush to collect a sample of cells from the surface of the cervix.
4. Send the sample to a laboratory for testing.

The procedure usually takes only a few minutes. Many people find the test slightly uncomfortable, but it should not be painful.

How long do results take?

Results are usually available within **10–14 days**, although this may vary slightly.

How often will I be invited for a cervical screening test?

- Ages 25–49: every 3 years
- Ages 50–64: every 5 years

What do my results mean?

HPV Negative

No HPV has been detected.

This means your risk of cervical cancer is very low, and you will be invited for your next routine screening when it is due.

HPV Positive

HPV has been detected.

This does **not** mean that you have cervical cancer. Further assessment is needed to check whether any cell changes are present. You may be referred for a procedure called **colposcopy**, which allows a specialist to examine the cervix more closely.

Inadequate or Inconclusive

Occasionally the laboratory cannot obtain a clear result from the sample.

If this happens, you may be asked to repeat the cervical screening test.

