

Having a smear test

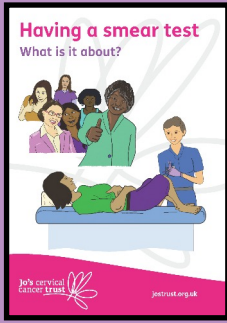
What is it about?



Jo's cervical
cancer trust



jostrust.org.uk

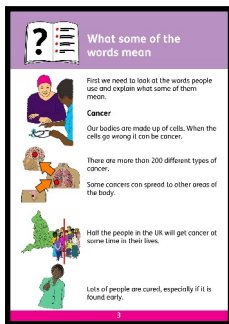


About this booklet



This is an EasyRead guide for women thinking about having a **smear test**.

It could help stop you getting cervical cancer.



It includes:

What some of the words mean Page 3



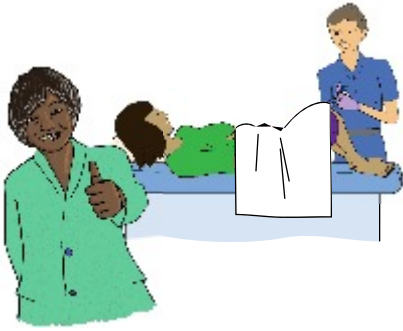
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It has been written by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust.

We are a charity for people with or who are worried about cervical cancer.

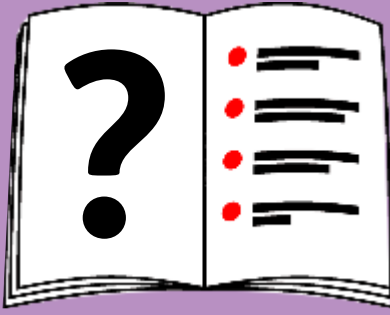


If you have any questions please call our helpline on:

0808 802 8000



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



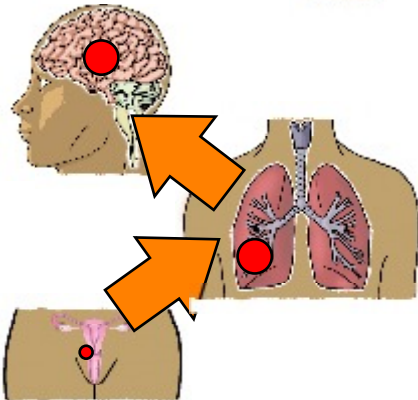
What some of the words mean



First we need to look at the words people use and explain what some of them mean.

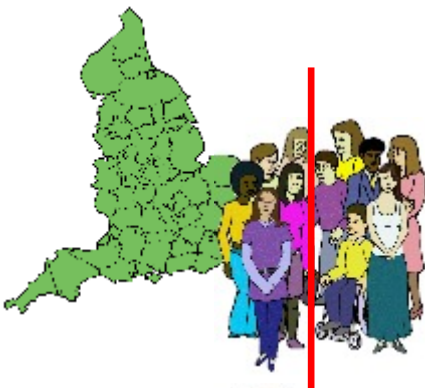
Cancer

Our bodies are made up of cells. When the cells go wrong it can be cancer.



There are more than 200 different types of cancer.

Some cancers can spread to other areas of the body.



Half the people in the UK will get cancer at some time in their lives.



Lots of people are cured, especially if it is found early.



Cervix and vagina

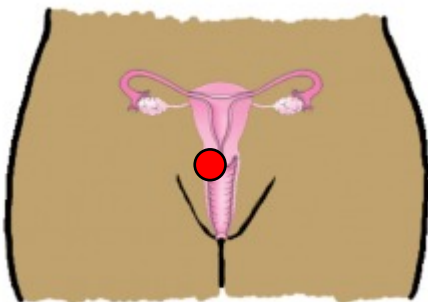
We are talking about your **cervix**. The cervix is inside your body at the top of your **vagina**. You cannot see it.

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

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

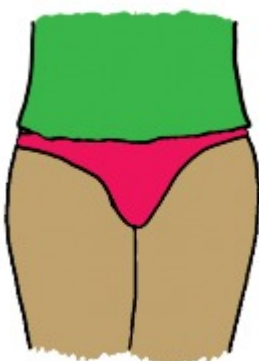


Here we say **cervix** and **vagina**.



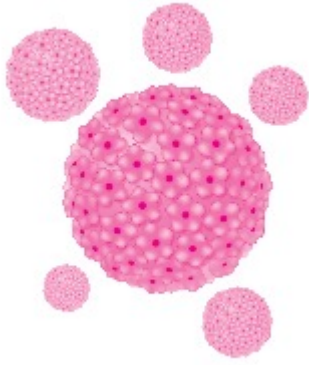
Cervical cancer

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



Underwear

Knickers or pants. Here we say **knickers**.



HPV

HPV is an infection or virus, like a cold. You catch HPV from other people. Some are serious, lots are not.

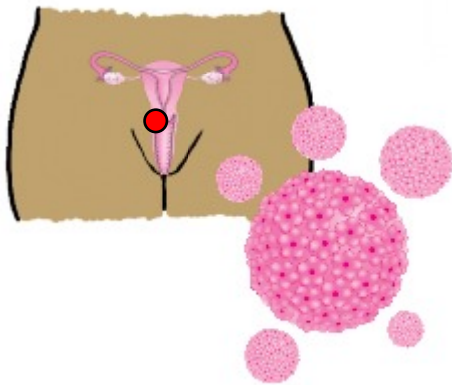


HPVs that cause cervical cancer can be caught when you have sex.

Most people catch HPV at some time in their lives.



Usually HPV does not cause a problem. You might not even know you have it.



There are many different types of HPV.

If some types of **HPV** get to your cervix they could cause cells to change so they are not normal.



For a very small number of women HPV can cause **cancer**.



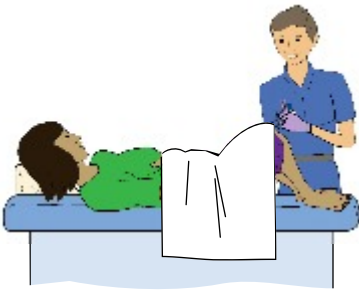
HPV Vaccination

This is a jab, like a flu jab, given to teenage girls that helps stop them getting some dangerous types of HPV.

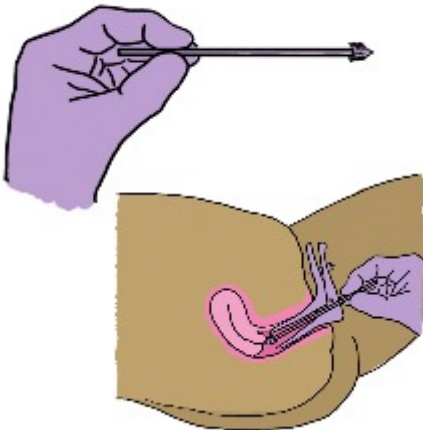


You still need to go for smear tests even if you have had the jab.

Cervical smear test



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



A **smear test** is when a small brush is put inside your **vagina** by a nurse or doctor to take a sample of cells from your **cervix**.

This is then tested to see if you have any changes in your cervix.



If you have changes you may also have a check to see if you have a dangerous type of HPV that can cause cancer.

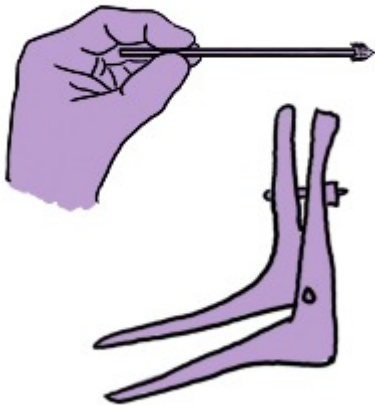


The smear test is looking to see if you have changes to your cervix. It is **not** a test for cancer.



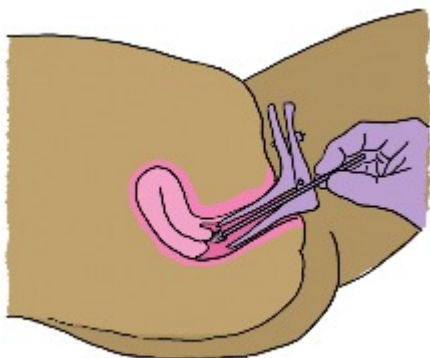
Finding changes to the cervix before they turn into cancer can help to stop cervical cancer.

Speculum



To put the smear test **brush** inside your **vagina** they first have to put an instrument in called a **speculum**.

It is usually plastic but sometimes it is made from metal.



The speculum opens the vagina which allows the nurse or doctor to see your cervix and take the sample.



Do you need a smear test?



Every woman is asked to go for cervical screening after the age of 25 and up until 64.

In Scotland it is from 20 to 60.

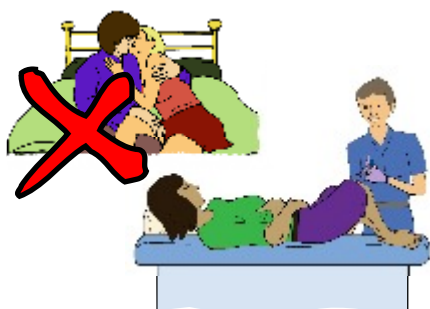


Any woman who has had sex with a man or a woman should think about having a smear test.



This means:

- anyone who has had any kind of sex
- any kind of sexual touching.



Even if you have not had sex, you can still choose to have a smear test. It's your choice.



Why is having a smear test important?



Very few women with learning disabilities have a test at the moment, far less than other women.



Some carers and health care professionals think women with learning disabilities don't need one.



Some times parents and carers are the last to know if you have started a relationship or are having sex.

Some parents and carers are too embarrassed to talk about it and don't help women with learning disabilities to get a test.



Having a smear test saves 5,000 women's lives every year. We think that anyone who gets a letter asking them to go for a smear should go.

Having a smear test could save your life.



Your rights



You have the right to have a smear test every 3 years if you want one and you are between 25 and 49. When you are 50 you can go every 5 years.

You need to be between 25 and 64 or between 20 and 60 in Scotland.



Your doctor usually sends a letter. If they don't, ask them.



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



You have the right to stop at any time during your test if it hurts, it is too uncomfortable or you just change your mind.



Top tips to make it as easy as it can be



1. Find out as much as you can about what happens during the test.



2. Read this EasyRead smear test information with someone who has had a smear and can help explain it to you.



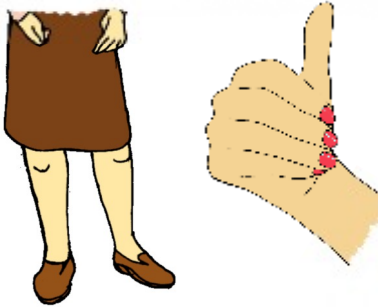
3. Talk about what happens with friends, family, your learning disability nurse or others.



4. Ask your doctors if you want to see where the test is done and what instruments they use.



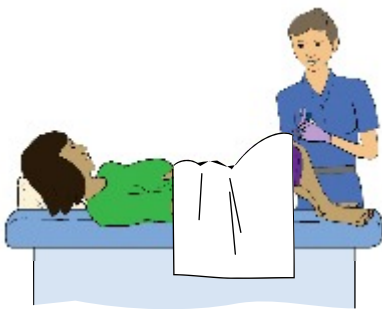
5. Take a friend with you. Having someone you trust with you can help. Plenty of women do this so don't be scared to ask.



6. Wear the right clothes to go to the test, a skirt is best.



7. Relax as much as you can.



8. Say straight away if it hurts.



9. If you have any questions ring us at Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust:
0808 802 8000 (free from a landline).

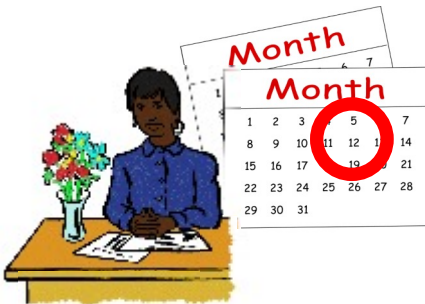
Or ask your nurse or doctor.



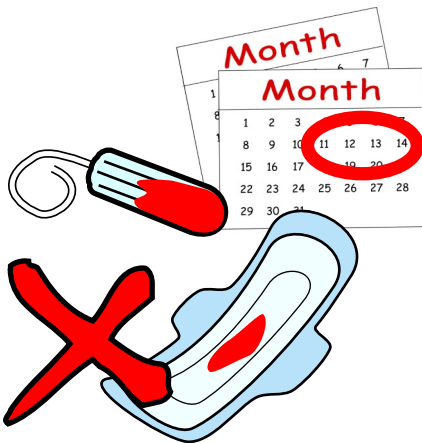
What happens during the smear test?



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



You need call your doctors to book a time and day to go.



Book a date when you are not having your period.



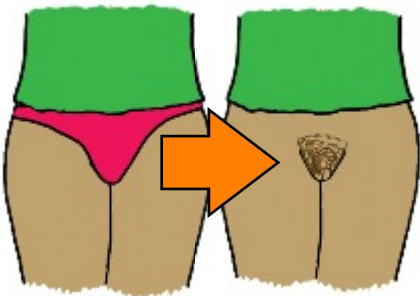
A nurse usually does the test. Tell them if you want to be sure a woman does it.



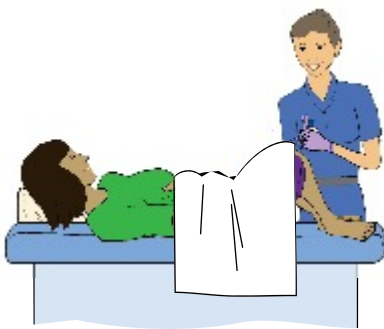
Tell them if you want a friend to stay with you.



You will go into a private room and they will ask you about your health.



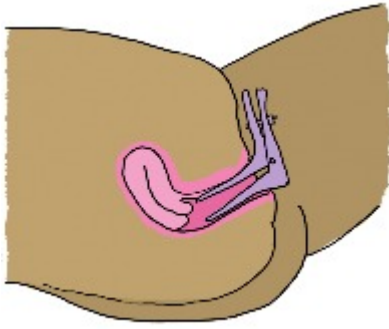
They will then ask you to take your knickers off.



And then to lie down on a bed with a paper sheet over you.



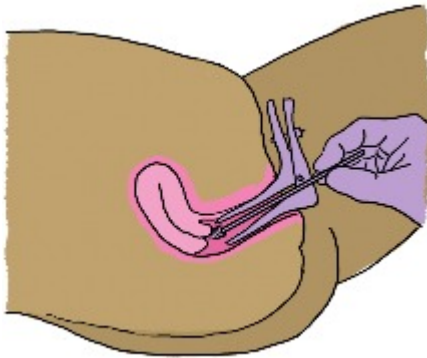
Now is the time to try to relax.



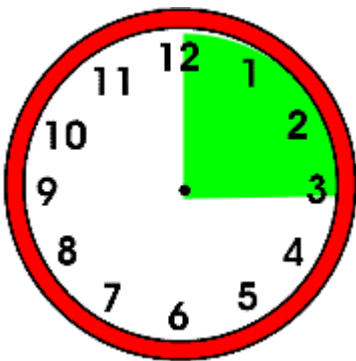
The nurse or doctor will ask you to open your legs so they can put the speculum up inside you.



This is the uncomfortable part. If it hurts tell them and they will stop.



The brush is then put up inside the speculum to take the sample. This does not hurt.



The speculum is taken out and it's all over. The whole visit only takes 15 minutes at the most.



The sample is sent to be tested.



You will be sent a letter in a few weeks with your results.



9 out of 10 women will have a normal result which means nothing is wrong.

You will be invited for another smear test in 3 or 5 years (depending on your age).



This means 1 out of 10 women might need to go back for more tests as they may have abnormal cells and an HPV infection.



Your results letter will tell you what you need to do next if this happens to you.



You can talk about the results with your carer, friends, learning disability nurse or call Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust Helpline on **0808 802 8000**.

The Smear Test Film



If you would like to know more about smear tests, you can also watch our film called **The Smear Test Film**.

You can watch the film on the web:
www.tinyurl.com/TheSmearTestFilm

Notes and appointments

How this booklet was produced



To make this booklet we asked women with learning disabilities to tell us their views on smear tests; what they wanted us to include in this EasyRead and how it should look.



We also asked health care professionals who know about smears tests to make sure the easyread is correct.

We hope you find it helpful to learn more about smear tests, your rights and cervical cancer.



This paper has been designed and produced for Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust by the EasyRead service at Inspired Services Publishing Ltd. Ref ISL 040/14. May 2015.



www.inspiredservices.org.uk

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Jo's cervical
cancer trust



Call our helpline:

0808 802 8000

The information included in this publication was correct at the time of going to press. We plan to review publications after two years however updates may happen more frequently. For updates or for the latest information, visit jostrust.org.uk.

**EasyRead booklet:
Having a smear test
What is it about?**

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Health & care
information
you can trust

The Information Standard



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