

Cervical Screening Changes 2025

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Cervical screening



Why have we chosen this topic?

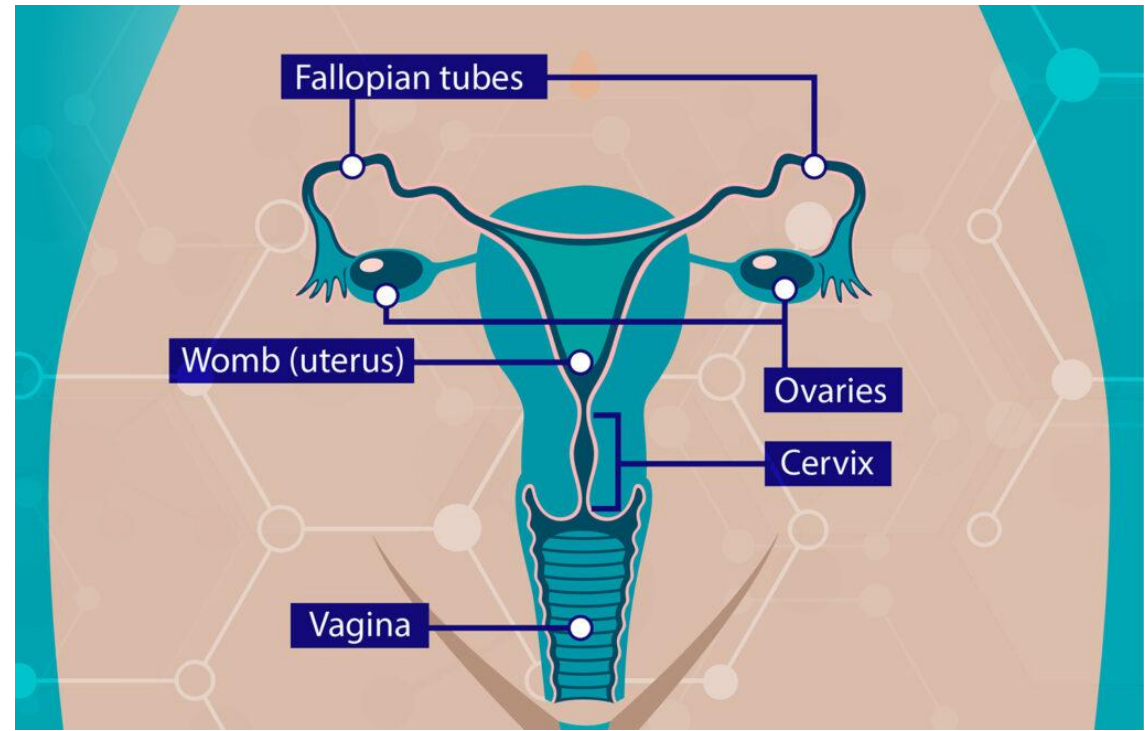
- Personal interest in women's health and preventative care
- Desire to improve patient understanding and compliance with screening guidelines
- Aim to optimize recall processes in general practice for better patient outcomes
 - To address concerns and confusion among patients regarding the change in recall intervals
 - To ensure accurate and consistent application of update guidelines in practice

What is Cervical Screening?

Cervical screening (commonly known as a smear test) is a routine test offered to people with a cervix to help prevent cervical cancer. cervix.

"Primary HPV screening is more effective at preventing cervical cancer than previous cytology-based testing." - UK National Screening Committee

Cervical screening prevents up to **83% of cervical cancer deaths** when attended regularly. The test is quick (about 5 minutes), and results are usually sent within 2 weeks.





Who is eligible?

All individuals aged 25 to 64 with a cervix, regardless of gender identity, this includes:

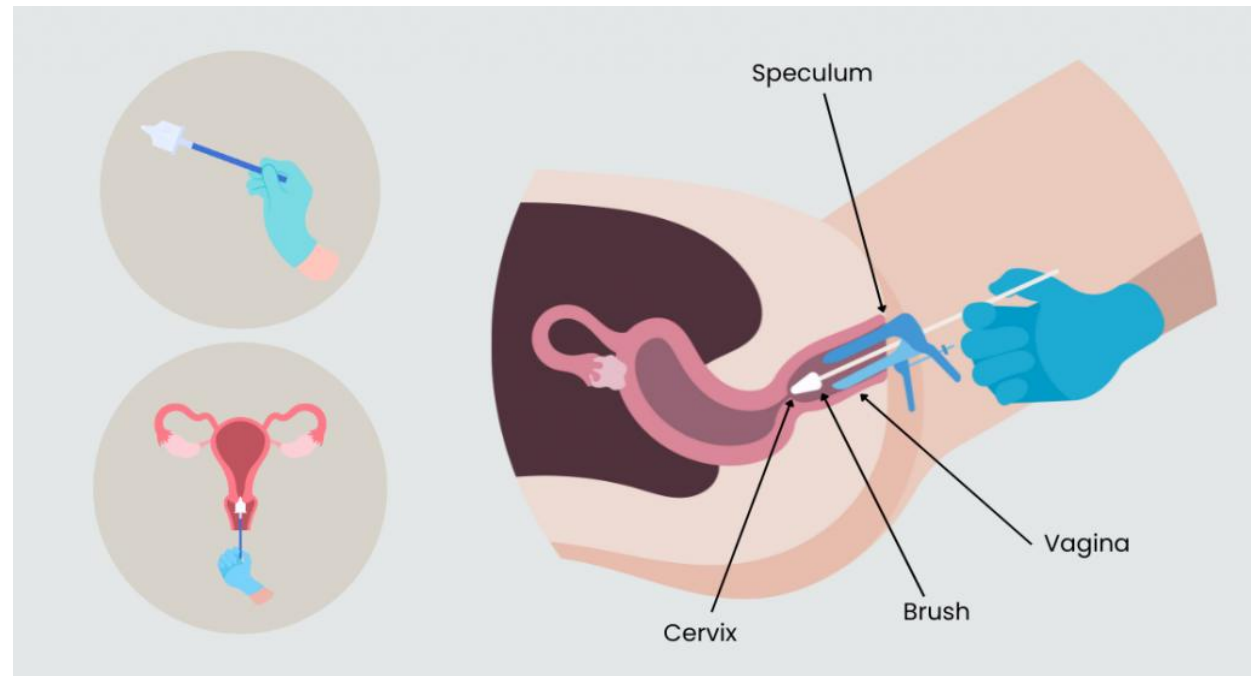
- Women registered as female with a GP
 - Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth (if they still have a cervix)
 - First invitation around age 24½, followed by the routine invite at 25.
 - 65 and over: Stop routine screening unless recent abnormal results
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How is the sample tested?

HPV Testing

- A small sample of cells is taken from the cervix using a soft brush.
- The sample is tested for high-risk HPV (HPV types known to cause cervical cancer).
- If HPV is not found, the person is at very low risk, and no further testing is needed until the next routine screen.
- If HPV is found, the same sample is checked for cell changes (cytology).

NHS. (2023). *Cervical screening programme overview and*
Cancer Research UK. (2024). *Cervical screening (smear test)*.



What is HPV and How can it be prevented?

HPV (human papillomavirus) is a very common group of viruses. HPV is spread through skin-to-skin contact, primarily during sexual activity, including:

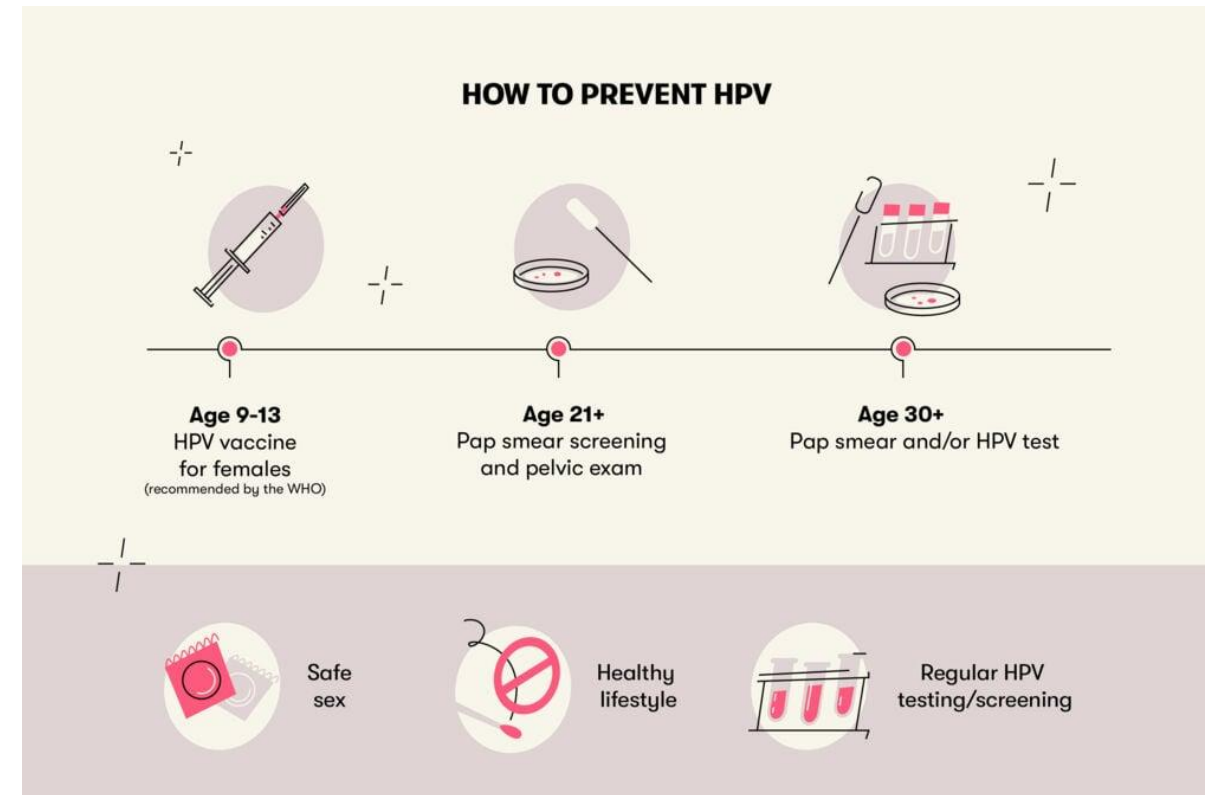
- Vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- Genital-to-genital contact without penetration
- Sharing sex toys

Prevention

HPV vaccination

Using condoms

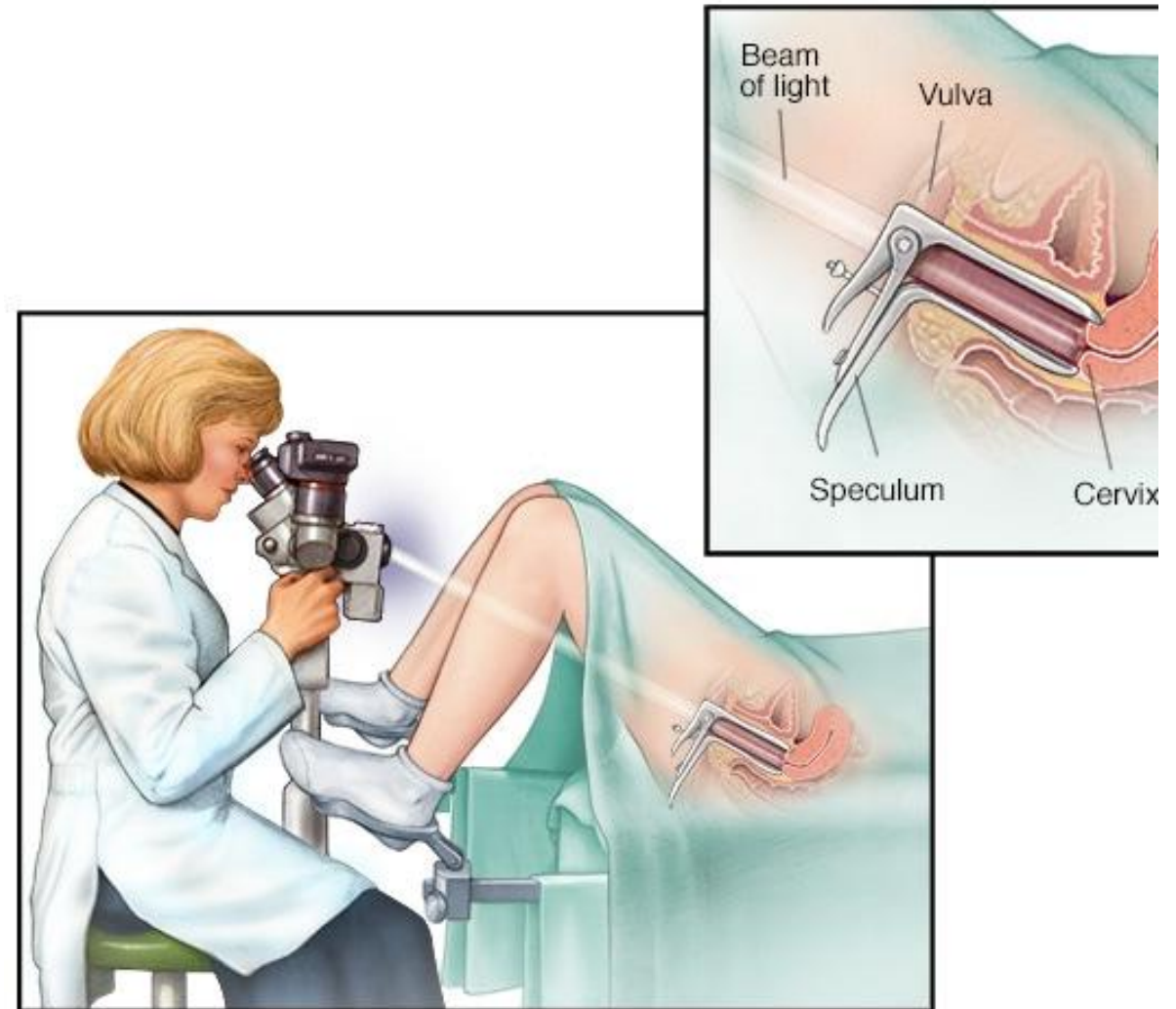
Regular cervical screening .



What is a Colposcopy?

You may be referred for a colposcopy if:

- You test positive for high-risk HPV and abnormal cells are found
- A screening sample shows borderline or unclear changes
- The cervix appears unusual during a physical exam

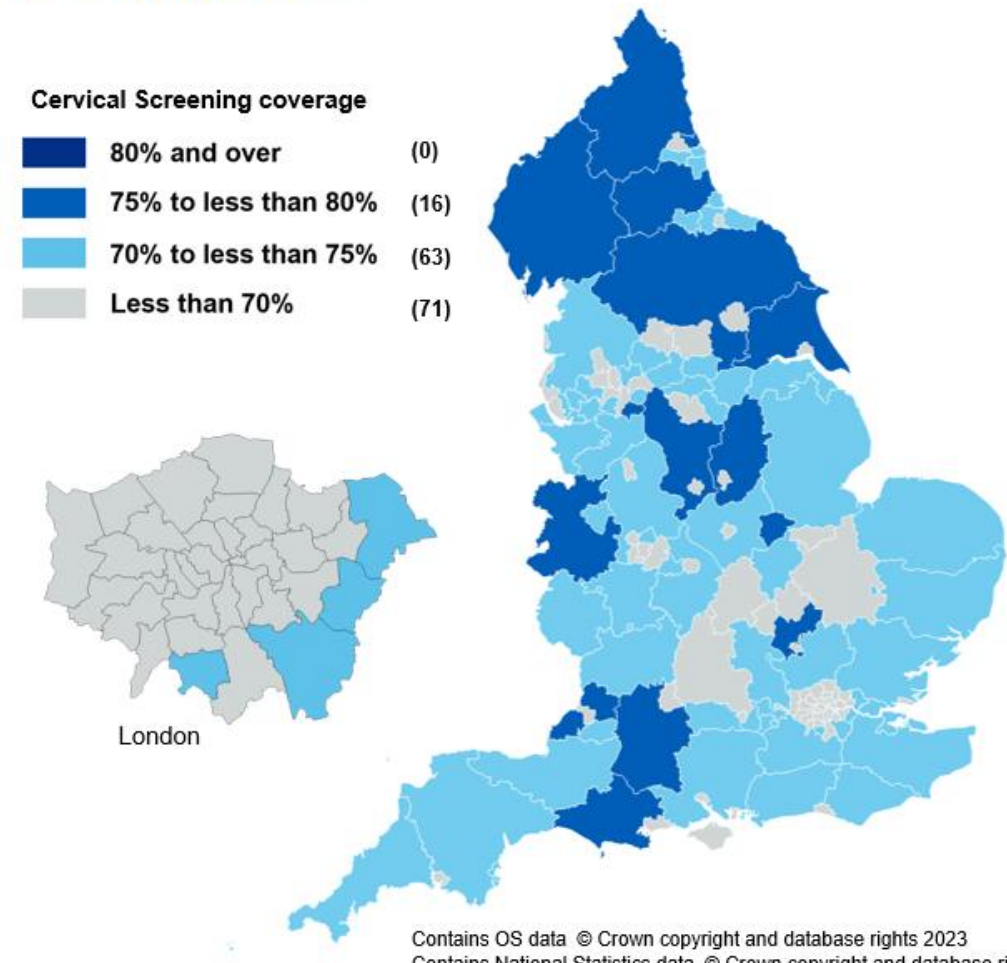


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Cervical screening local coverage

- No Local Authority achieved the acceptable performance level of 80%.
- 79 of 150 LAs had coverage levels of 70% and above, a decrease of 8 compared to 2022.

Cervical screening coverage map, Local Authority
31 March 2023



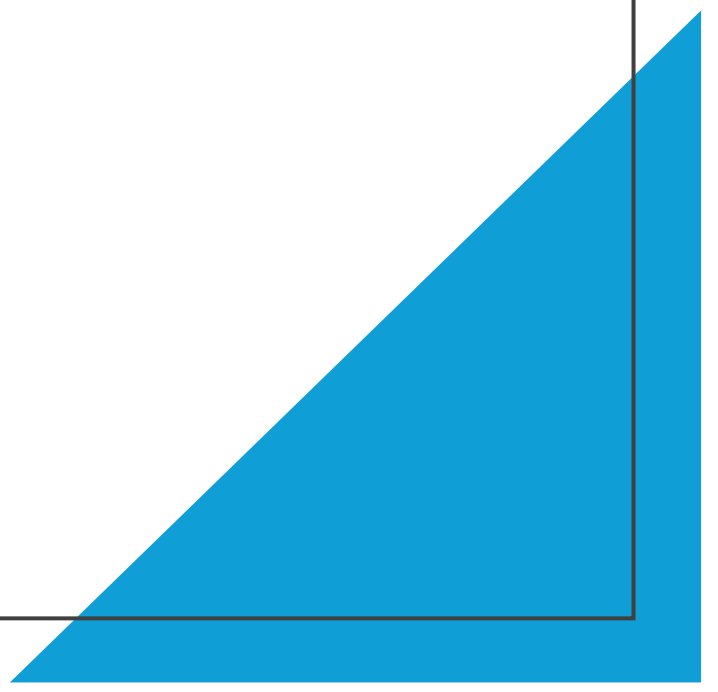
Barriers to Cervical Screening

- **Knowledge & Awareness:** Lack of understanding about the purpose and benefits.
- **Psychological:** Fear of pain, anxiety about results, embarrassment.
- **Practical:** Inconvenient times/locations, childcare, transport.
- **Cultural/Language:** Language barriers, cultural beliefs, mistrust
- **Socioeconomic:** Low income, limited access, low education.
- **Negative Experiences:** Past pain, insensitive providers.
- **Perceived Risk:** Belief of not being at risk.
- **Communication:** Poor reminders, lack of follow-up.
- **Disability/Mobility:** Physical barriers, accessibility issues.

Previous Cervical Screening schedule

Previous recall: Routine screening is offered to individuals ages 25–49 every 3 years, and 50–64 every 5 years, with invitations sent by mail via GP registration.

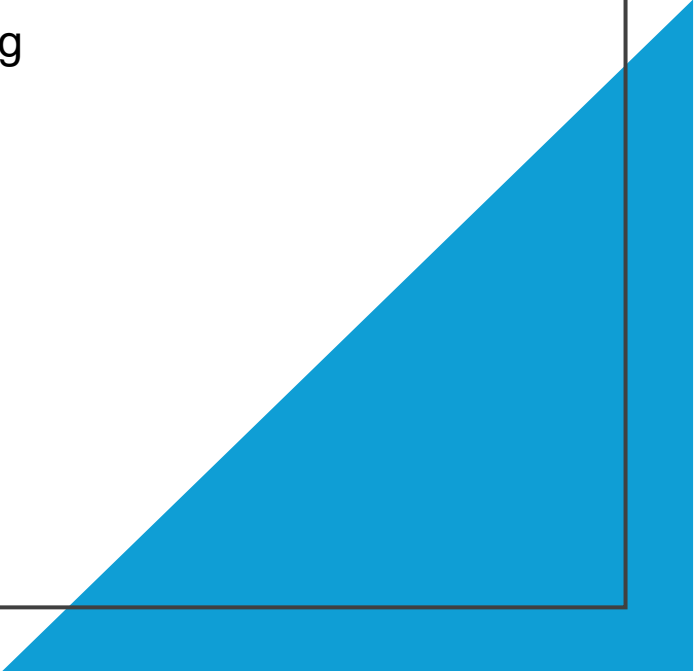
Following your cervical screening:

- If HPV is **not found**, you don't need any further tests until your next screening in 3 years
 - If HPV **is found**, the same sample is checked for **cell changes**.
 - If changes are seen → you may be referred for a colposcopy.
 - If no changes → you'll be invited back in 1 year to check again.
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New Cervical Screening schedule

From 1 July 2025: Age range unchanged, but the interval for 25–49 year-olds will extend to **5 years**—for those who test negative for high-risk HPV

Following your cervical screening:

- If HPV is **not found**, you don't need any further tests until your next screening in **5 years**
 - If HPV **is found**, the same sample is checked for **cell changes**.
 - If changes are seen → you may be referred for a colposcopy.
 - If no changes → you'll be invited back in 1 year to check again.
- 



Why is the schedule changing?

- Since December 2019, screening has relied on primary HPV testing, which checks for high-risk HPV infection before examining cell abnormalities. This method is more accurate and sensitive than the older cytology-first approach
 - HPV causes over **99% of cervical cancers**, so detecting it is a clearer indicator of future cancer risk .
 - Multiple studies, including a King's College London pilot published in the BMJ (2022), show that HPV-negative individuals remain at extremely low cancer risk for at least 5 years, comparable in safety to the 3-year cytology system. A Cancer Research UK study noted that those testing HPV-negative were **significantly less likely** to develop abnormalities by their next test than cytology-negative individuals
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