

## Your cervical screening results

Your cervical screening results will be sent to you in a letter. If you are waiting for a long period for your results, contact your GP or clinic to see if they have any updates. Your letter may say:

- HPV not found – next screening in 3 or 5 years depending on your age
- HPV found and no abnormal cell changes – you should have repeat screening in 12 months
- HPV found and abnormal cell changes – you need a colposcopy
- Inadequate or unsatisfactory sample – you need to have a repeat cervical screen after 3 months

Cervical cancer is a rare outcome of a HPV infection. In most cases, it takes about 10 to 15 years for cervical cancer to develop.

## How cervical cancer is diagnosed

You should see your GP if you develop any changes that are not normal for you or if you have any of the possible signs and symptoms. Even if you're worried about what the symptom might be, don't delay in seeing your GP.

## Treatment

When pre – cancerous cells are diagnosed a number of procedures can be carried out to treat these cells. Treatment for cervical cancer depends on the type, stage and grade of cancer but may include:

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy (External and/or Brachytherapy)
- Chemotherapy
- Chemo radiotherapy
- Clinical trials

Your doctor will discuss a specific treatment plan with you and answer any questions you may have.

## HPV School Vaccination Programme

Boys and girls are offered the Gardasil 9 HPV vaccine for free in 1st year in secondary school. The vaccine protects against almost all cases of cervical cancer;

- 7 out of 10 vaginal cancers
- 5 out of 10 vulval cancers
- 9 out of 10 HPV related anal cancers
- 9 out of 10 cases of genital warts

Ask your GP about the HPV Vaccine Catch-up Programme for 16-24 year olds.

## About the Marie Keating Foundation

Following their mother Marie's death in 1998 from breast cancer, the Keating family committed to ensuring men and women in every community in Ireland had access to the necessary information to prevent cancer or detect it at its earliest stages. Their collective aim was "making cancer less frightening by enlightening".

Through its community information service, the Foundation's dedicated nurses have enlightened thousands of people of the causes and risk factors of all cancers. The Foundation is continuing to expand its awareness campaigns on each of the common cancers, at local level through its community outreach approach as well as through national campaigns.

Today, the Marie Keating Foundation are one of the leading voices in Ireland for cancer prevention, early detection, awareness and support.

"We are committed to being there for people diagnosed with cancer, and their families at every step of this cancer journey, and our services reflect that. Through our information and support services, we reach thousands of people a year, giving education, information and advice focused on cancer prevention and early detection, as well as providing support services and financial assistance to those living with and beyond cancer.

At the time of her death and all through her illness, we could do nothing to help our Mother who had, all our lives, done everything for us. We, the Keating family have set up this charity in her name to try to help and prevent others going through what Mam went through and what we are still going through to this day. This is also to show that such a wonderful mother and person did not die in vain."

Take care,



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# Cervical Cancer

What you should know



Marie Keating  
FOUNDATION

making cancer less frightening by enlightening

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# Cervical Cancer

## the facts

- Between 250 - 300 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in Ireland each year
- Cervical cancer is the 4th most common cancer worldwide
- It mostly affects women aged 30 to 50 and is rare under the age 25
- When diagnosed early, cervical cancer is very treatable

## The cervix and cervical cancer

Cervical cancer happens when abnormal cells in the lining of the cervix grow in an uncontrolled way and eventually form a tumour (growth).

The cervix is another name for the neck of the womb (uterus). The womb/cervix are part of a woman's reproductive system, which is made up of the:

- Vagina
- Womb, including the cervix
- Ovaries
- Fallopian tubes

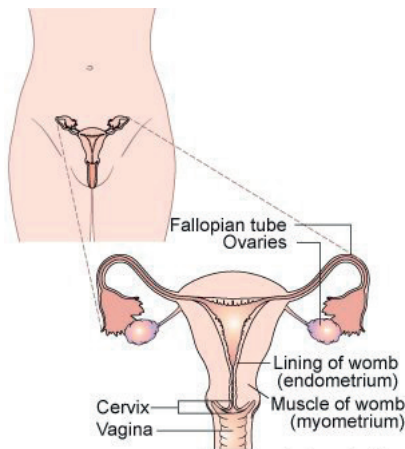


Diagram showing the parts of the female reproductive system Copyright © Cancer Research UK

## Types of cervical cancer

There are two main types of cervical cancer. The most common is squamous cell carcinoma. This develops from a type of cell that covers the lining of the cervix. The other type is adeno carcinoma. This develops from a different type of cell found in the cervical canal. The area where cervical cells are most likely to develop is called the transformation zone. It is the area just around the opening of the cervix. Very rarely, other types of cancer can occur in the cervix, i.e., small cell cancer, lymphomas and sarcomas. They are treated in a different way to cervical cancer.

## Risks and causes of cervical cancer

### Human Papilloma Virus (HPV):

Almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease worldwide and is mainly transmitted through any kind of sexual contact with an infected person. About 80% of all people born female will get a HPV infection during their lifetime, usually in their late teens and early 20s. Most HPV infections will clear naturally but some caused by high-risk HPV infection can progress to cervical cancer.

### Other risk factors include:

- If you smoke you are twice as likely to develop cervical cancer as opposed to those who don't smoke
- Having a weakened immune system E.g. Human immunodeficiency virus or organ transplant
- Being sexually active in early teenage years or having several sexual partners
- Long-term use of oral contraceptives (birth control pills). Risk goes back to normal when stopped
- Having multiple full-term pregnancies (>3) or having your first baby before the age of 17

## What to look out for

Early cervical cancer and pre-cancerous cell changes don't usually have symptoms.

The most common symptoms of cervical cancer include:

- Bleeding between periods
- Bleeding after or during sex
- Bleeding at any time after the menopause
- Bleeding between scheduled HPV Cervical Screening
- A vaginal discharge that smells unpleasant
- Discomfort or pain during sex

There are many other conditions that cause these symptoms. However, if you experience any of the above, please contact your GP just to be sure.

## Cervical Check - The National Cervical Screening Programme

Cervical Check is a government funded service that provides free HPV cervical screening to women in Ireland age 25-65. HPV cervical screening has replaced the 'smear'. Cervical screening checks the health of your cervix. It is not a test and it is screening to help prevent cancer from developing.

### Women are invited for free HPV cervical screening:

- Every 3 years for women aged 25 - 29
- Every 5 years for women aged 30 - 65

### HPV cervical screening:

- is a better way of cervical screening
- prevents more cancers
- taken in the same way as the smear
- if your sample is positive for HPV, it will then be checked for abnormal cells
- You will receive an information leaflet about this from CervicalCheck

Visit [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie) or Freephone 1800 45 45 55 to check that you are on the register. Women who have already participated in CervicalCheck will automatically receive a letter when their next screen is due.

You do not need to wait until you receive a letter to have a cervical screen. If your screening is due or you missed your last check you can go ahead and book a cervical screen. Visit [cervicalcheck.ie](http://cervicalcheck.ie) for a list of GP practices or clinics where you can avail of your free HPV cervical screening. If you experience any of the symptoms previously outlined between your cervical screens please do contact your GP. Do not wait for your next invite for cervical screening.