

Reviewing your cervical screening history

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We know that this is a difficult time for you and naturally you will be concerned about your treatment and future health. However, you may also be wondering why you have developed cervical cancer, especially if you have had screening tests (often known as smear tests) in the past.

Cervical screening reduces the risk of developing cervical cancer. Regular screening is the best way to detect changes to the cervix early on, but like other screening tests it is not perfect.

The cervical screening process involves many different steps which aim to identify and treat abnormal cells on the cervix to prevent cervical cancer. It may be that all steps have been followed efficiently and that a cervical cancer has developed despite the screening programme working properly. Or it could be that at one or more of these steps, something may not have worked as well as it should. Reviewing your previous tests will help identify if anything should have been done differently.

Reviews are an essential part of every high-quality screening programme and are a routine part of the cervical screening process. Information we gather from individual cases helps to improve the programme and also helps us to learn more about how cancers develop and how they are diagnosed.

If you would like to know the results of the review please let us know and we will contact you when they are available and arrange a convenient time for you to come and discuss them with your doctor.

What does the review involve?

We review all records connected to the letters inviting you to come for cervical screening tests, result letters and any previous medical investigations related to cervical screening. A group of professionals then look again at your previous tests, your medical notes related to cervical screening and also examine whether your screening history meets national guidance.

What will the review show?

In most cases, the review will show that the correct procedures have been followed and that you received appropriate care. Occasionally the review may find that one or more steps in the process have not worked as well as they should and may highlight where we could make improvements.

What happens if I want to know the results of the review?

If you want to know the results of the review please let your hospital gynaecology doctor know and we can then arrange to discuss these with you.

What if I don't want to know the results of the review now but change my mind later?

We understand this is a difficult time and you may not want to receive the results of the review now. If you decide that you do want to know the results in the future please contact your gynaecology hospital doctor who will discuss the review with you.

What if I don't want to know the results of the review?

It is completely up to you to decide whether or not you want to know the results of the review.

Can my family ask for the results if I don't want to know?

No, unless you give permission we cannot give your relatives access to details of your medical records.

Could my cancer have been found earlier?

In many cases the cancer will have been detected at the earliest possible stage. Although cervical screening prevents a high percentage of cervical cancers (about 75%) it cannot prevent all of them. The review process aims to highlight any possible areas of weakness so we can make improvement for everyone.

Some examples are given below;

- Screening cannot always identify abnormal cells on a cervical-sample slide because:
- Sometimes the cells do not look much different from normal cells
- There may be very few abnormal cells on the slide
- The person reading the slide may miss the abnormality (this happens occasionally, no matter how experienced the reader is).

Colposcopy (a visual examination of the cervix) cannot always identify abnormal areas of the cervix because;

- The abnormal area might not be visible during the examination
- The abnormal area might not be taken as a sample in a biopsy
- The abnormal cells might be hidden higher up inside the cervix
- Some types of abnormality are simply not easy to identify at a colposcopy.

What happens to the information collected for my review?

We collect screening information as part of an ongoing process. Your information (without your name) goes towards improving the systems of the programme and to help discover more about how cancers develop and how they are diagnosed and treated. This is done whether or not you want to know the results of the review.

Why should women bother to go for cervical screening if abnormalities can be missed?

Cervical screening reduces the risk of developing cervical cancer. The cervical screening programme is estimated to save 4500 lives a year nationally and regular screening is the best way to detect early changes to the cervix.

Your notes or questions

(Please write down any questions you have and bring them with you to your next appointment).

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

Trust Values

- Courtesy and respect
- A welcoming and positive attitude
 - Polite, friendly and interested in people
 - Value and respect people as individuals
So people feel **welcome**
- Attentively kind and helpful
- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
 - Attentive, responsive & take time to help
 - Visible presence of staff to provide care
So people feel **cared for**

- Responsive communication
- Listen to people & answer their questions
 - Keep people clearly informed
 - Involve people
So people feel **in control**
- Effective and professional
- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
 - Effective care / services from joined up teams
 - Organised and timely, looking to improve
So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240