


Spot cervical cancer early



Listen to
your body

The cervix is the entrance to the womb from the vagina. If you want to know more about spotting the signs of cervical cancer, this information is for you.

Most cervical cancer cases are in women aged 25–49. But it can affect people at any age who have a cervix, including women, some trans men and some non-binary people.

If you spot something unusual, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer, but if it is, finding it at an early stage means treatment is more likely to be successful.



Listen to your body

You know your body best, so don't ignore something that doesn't seem quite right. Talk to your doctor if you notice any changes that aren't normal for you.

The symptoms listed here are more likely to be signs of other conditions – but it's best to get them, or any other unusual changes, checked out.

- Unusual vaginal bleeding, such as during or after sex, after the menopause, or when you're not on your period
- Changes to your vaginal discharge
- Pain or discomfort during sex
- Pain in the area between the hip bones (pelvis).



Talk to your doctor

Whether it's via phone, video or face-to-face, your doctor wants to hear about any unusual changes you're experiencing. If you're worried about talking to a doctor, here are some tips:

✓ Be prepared

Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say and ask can help.

✓ Be honest

Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem important or you think it might be embarrassing. Your doctor is a professional and is used to helping with lots of different symptoms.

✓ Be thorough

Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or assume it's part of another health condition or pregnancy.

✓ Stick with it

Don't worry about wasting your GP's time. Even if you're struggling to get an appointment, or you've been to see them already, they want to know if something's still not right.



Cervical screening

Screening is for people without symptoms. It helps prevent cervical cancer.

If you're 25–64 and registered as female with the GP, you'll be sent an invitation.

If you aren't invited but think it might still be relevant for you, speak to your GP or Gender Identity Clinic.

It's your choice whether or not to go for cervical screening, but we encourage you to attend. It saves thousands of lives every year in the UK.

Cervical screening is for people whether or not they've been vaccinated. This is because the HPV vaccine doesn't protect against all types of HPV.

Read the information that comes with your invite, to decide if you'd like to take part.

Even if you've been screened, tell your GP about anything that's not normal for you.



HPV and cervical cancer risk

Nearly all cases of cervical cancer are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV).

HPV is a common virus. Most people will get it at some point in their lives. HPV is passed on through skin-to-skin contact, usually during sexual activity..

Usually, the body clears the infection and it doesn't cause any problems. But some types of HPV can cause cancer if they stay in the body for a long time.

The HPV vaccine helps to prevent cancer by protecting against the main types of HPV. It is safe, effective and free for all children aged 11–13 and some adults.

Not smoking makes it easier to fight off HPV. Contact your free, local stop smoking service or speak to your GP for support.



Early diagnosis saves lives

What if it is cancer?

Cancer survival is increasing – more people are surviving their cancer today than ever before.

When cancer is spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. And thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever.

How to find out more

Visit our website

Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at: cruk.org/spotcancerearly

Give us a call

Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0808 800 4040**.

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used to create it, please email publications@cancer.org.uk

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.

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