



CANCER  
RESEARCH  
UK

# KNOW YOUR BODY SPOT CANCER EARLY

CERVICAL  
CANCER



# TAKE CHARGE

Whether you've heard about it from a friend or family member, seen it in the news, or are just curious: if you want to know more about spotting the signs of cervical cancer, this leaflet is for you.

You'll find out what to look out for, tips for telling your doctor if something's not quite right, and some key facts about screening.

When it comes to your health, remember you're in charge.

**If you do spot something unusual, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer** – but if it is, finding it early can make a real difference.



# KNOW YOUR BODY

Talk to your doctor if you notice any unusual bleeding, or any other changes such as:

- Bleeding during or after sex
- Bleeding after the menopause
- Bleeding between periods
- Changes to your vaginal discharge

These are more likely to be signs of other common conditions. But it is best to get these, or any other problems such as pain, checked out just in case.

## LOOK OUT FOR YOUR SCREENING INVITE

Screening looks for very early changes in the cervix that could turn into cancer if they're not treated. It's for people who feel healthy and do not have any symptoms.



There is a national cervical cancer screening programme in the UK for women aged 25-64.



Invitations are sent in the post. Read the information to decide whether you'd like to take part.

Even if you've been screened, see your doctor if you notice anything that's not normal for you.

# CUT YOUR RISK



## PROTECT AGAINST INFECTION

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common infection. In most people it doesn't cause problems, but HPV causes virtually all cases of cervical cancer. There is a vaccine which has been shown to be safe and effective at preventing infection by the main types of HPV. It is available through the NHS for girls aged 11-18.



## GO SMOKE FREE

Smoking can make it harder to fight an HPV infection off. Contact your free local Stop Smoking Services or speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist for help stopping.

## WHAT ELSE AFFECTS YOUR RISK?

- **Age:** Cervical cancer is most often diagnosed in women aged 25-29, but it is also common in older women.
- **Hormones:** Oral contraceptives (the Pill) increase the risk of cervical cancer, but are effective medications. The Pill affects the risk of several cancers, but overall it prevents more than it causes. Speak to your doctor to help you decide if it's for you.

# TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

When you're worried about your health, telling a doctor can feel tough. Here are our tips to get the most out of your appointment:



**Be open.** Some symptoms are tricky to talk about, but there's nothing to be embarrassed of: we are all human!



**Be thorough.** Don't dismiss changes as 'part of getting older' or assume they are down to another health condition you might have – mention them to your doctor.



**Be as stubborn as your symptom.** Don't worry you're wasting your doctor's time. If your symptoms haven't gone away, make another appointment. Your doctor will want to know.



**Be prepared.** Have a think about how to describe the changes, and roughly how long you've had them for.

# EARLY DIAGNOSIS SAVES LIVES

What if it is cervical cancer? Remember, when it's spotted early, treatment is more likely to be successful. Thanks to research, treatments are kinder and more effective than ever.

## WE'RE ONLINE...



Learn more about spotting cancer early, including information about screening across the UK, at [cruk.org/spotcancerearly](http://cruk.org/spotcancerearly)

## ...AND ON THE PHONE



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

To provide feedback on this leaflet or find out more about the sources used to create it, call **020 3469 8333** or email [publications@cancer.org.uk](mailto:publications@cancer.org.uk)

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support us call **0300 123 1022**.



LET'S BEAT CANCER **SOONER**

