



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Screening for cervical cancer

Invitation



Why this screening?

Every year, about 700 women get cervical cancer, and about 200 women die from this disease. Cervical cancer occurs most frequently in women between 30 and 60 years of age. That is why we invite these women for this screening.

The screening is used to test women for the risk of having cervical cancer. Early detection can prevent cervical cancer. Women who participate in the screening have a reduced risk of cervical cancer.

Why this brochure?

In this brochure, you will find information about the screening for cervical cancer. The purpose of this brochure is to give you information about the screening, so you can decide whether or not you wish to participate.

Every year, about 750,000 women receive an invitation for the screening. About 70% of the women participate in the screening.



An updated type of screening for cervical cancer will be used from 2017 onwards. The smear test at the general practice will remain the same. But the analysis of the smear test in the lab is different. We test the smear test for the human papilloma virus (HPV). Only if we find HPV, will we also check whether there are any abnormal cells. The new way of testing is better. As a result, we will be able to detect whether there is a risk of cervical cancer in even more women.

“Cervical cancer can be prevented by early detection.”

What causes cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is caused by a long-lasting infection with a virus: the human papilloma virus (HPV).

HPV occurs frequently. Nearly everyone gets HPV at one point in time. The body is nearly always able to clean up the virus on its own. Sometimes, it does not succeed in this. For example, if the body’s resistance is low. This may be caused, among other things, by taking specific medicinal products and smoking.

If the body fails to clean up the virus, the cells in the cervix may change. Abnormal cells may change in a preliminary stage of cervical cancer.

- *About 8 out of 10 women have HPV at some point in their lives.*
- *The virus is nearly always transmitted through sexual contact.*
- *If you have HPV, the risk of getting cervical cancer is still small.*

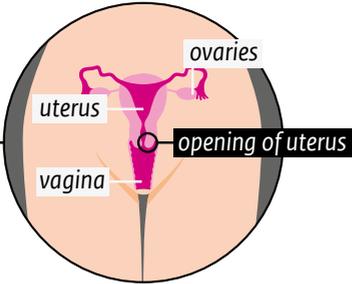
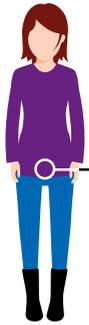
This is not cancer and can be treated well. The treatment prevents it from developing into cancer.

The first stage sometimes develops into cervical cancer. This is a very slow process. It usually takes at least 15 years.

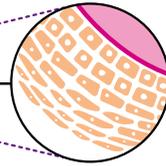
You can read more information about HPV and cervical cancer on pages 6 and 7.



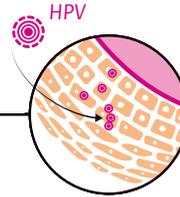
HPV Infection



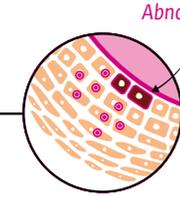
Cervix & opening of uterus



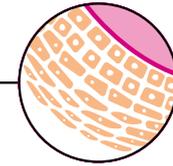
Magnification of healthy cells in the cervix



The HPV enters the cells

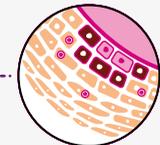


HPV may change the cells in the cervix

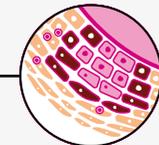


Usually, the body is able to clean up the virus on its own within two years

Sometimes, the body does not clean up the virus in the cells



Mildly to moderately abnormal cells



Moderately to severely abnormal cells



Cervical cancer

The body is able to clean up mildly or moderately abnormal cells on its own

Cervical cancer may develop in about 15 years

HPV occurs frequently. In 8 out of 10 women, the body is able to clear the HPV infection on its own.

What happens during the screening?

The smear test

You make your own appointment for a smear test at the general practice.

The smear test is usually performed by a doctor's assistant. She will ask you a few questions. Next, you undress from the waist down.

The doctor's assistant uses a special instrument for the test: the speculum. She gently slides the speculum into your vagina. With a small brush, she samples cells from the cervix. She puts them into a pot, which she sends to the lab. The test lasts about 10 minutes.

The smear test will be tested for HPV in the lab. If this virus is present, they will also establish immediately whether the smear test contains

abnormal cells. The result of this cell analysis will determine whether further examination at the gynaecologist is necessary.

If you want to see how the screening is carried out, please visit: www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaar-moederhalskanker.nl and watch the animation video.

Are you very uncomfortable with the test? Please tell the doctor or doctor's assistant before the smear test is performed. They will take this into consideration.

Self-sampling device

Do you feel very uncomfortable having a smear test performed by your family doctor? Is this a reason for you not to participate in the screening? In that case, there is a self-sampling device. Visit the website www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaar-moederhalskanker.nl for more information about the advantages and disadvantages.



In most practices, the smear test is performed by a female doctor's assistant or family doctor. Is this not possible at your general practice, but is this what you would like? Please personally contact a different general practice. Do you have any questions about this? Please contact the information line. You will find the telephone number in the invitation letter.



1 THE LETTER

You will receive a letter at home, and you can make an appointment for a smear test at the family doctor.

- ✉ *Bring the letter with you to the appointment.*
- 🕒 *The appointment lasts about 10 minutes.*

2 DOCTOR'S ASSISTANT

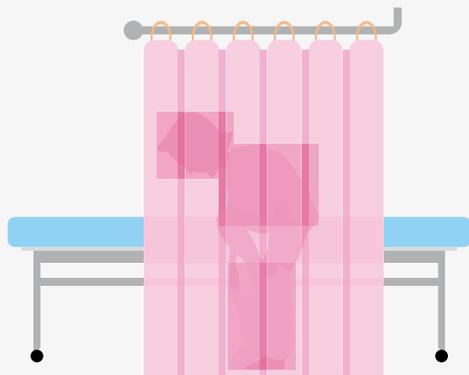
The smear test is usually performed by the doctor's assistant. She will ask you a few questions.

If you feel uncomfortable about the smear test please tell the doctor or doctor's assistant before it is performed.



3 UNDRESS

Then you undress from the waist down.

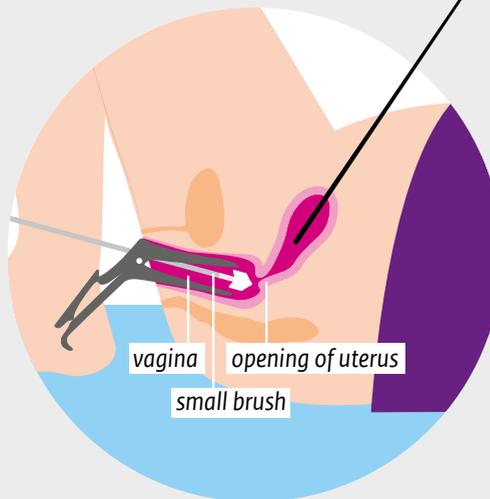


4 THE SMEAR TEST

The doctor's assistant uses a special instrument for the test: the speculum.



The doctor's receptionist uses a small brush to sample some endometrium from the cervix.



5 DONE

You may dress again; the test is done.

- ✉ *You will receive a letter with the result within four weeks.*



When will you receive an invitation?

When you are between 30 and 60 years old, you will automatically receive an invitation for the free screening every 5 years. Are you 40 or 50 years old and has the screening not detected HPV?

In that case, you will receive a new invitation in 10 years' time. If you do not have HPV, the risk of getting cervical cancer within 10 years is very small. So small, that another smear test in 10 years' time will give you sufficient protection.

How to participate?

- You make your own appointment for a smear test at the general practice.
- Have your smear test performed on a day you are not having your period.
- A full bladder or intestine may give an uncomfortable feeling while the smear test is being performed. Therefore, it is wise to go to the toilet beforehand.

You cannot participate or you would like to participate at a later date

You cannot participate if you are pregnant or if you have just given birth. You can participate again six months after having given birth. There are also medical reasons for not (or not yet) participating in the screening. For example, when your cervix has been removed. When in doubt, please consult with your family doctor. If you would like to participate later on or if you would not like to participate at all, please pass this on to the information line. You will find the telephone number in the invitation letter.

It's your decision

Just as with any other medical test, the screening has advantages and disadvantages. The government provides this screening because the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. This may vary from person to person.

Whether or not to participate is your decision. The screening is particularly successful in detecting the preliminary stages of cancer.

Treatment in a preliminary stage can prevent cervical cancer from developing. This is an advantage.

The screening also has disadvantages. For the sake of certainty, a preliminary stage is always treated. Whereas it may sometimes go away on its own. In such cases, treatment would not have been necessary.

What can the results be?

About four weeks after the screening, you will receive a letter with the results. You can get the following results:

No HPV

You do not have an increased risk of cervical cancer. Further testing is not necessary. You may participate in the screening again in the next round of invitations.



91 out of 100 women get this result.

HPV detected, no abnormal cells

You will receive another invitation for a smear test at the family doctor after six months. We then check once again to ensure that no abnormal cells are present.



5 out of 100 women get this result.

HPV and abnormal cells detected

Further examination by a gynaecologist is necessary. He/She will decide whether treatment is necessary.



2 out of 100 women get this result

Unclear

A new smear test is required. Please make an appointment with your family doctor for this in about six weeks after your first smear test.

In 2 out of 100 women, the smear test is inconclusive.

More information about the result?
Please visit www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl



Privacy

In order to be able to send you an invitation, we received your name, address, and date of birth from the municipality. With regard to your data, we comply with the Data Protection Act. We use the results from the test to continue to improve the screening. Therefore, we sometimes exchange data with other organisations. In this context, your data will be protected optimally.

If you object to us sharing data or results from the screening with other organisations, you can voice your objection to this. For more information about privacy or how to object, visit www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl. There, you will also find information about what will happen with the material sampled after the screening.

What does the screening cost?

The smear test at the family doctor is free of charge. A smear test or follow-up examination at the gynaecologist is not part of the screening. These costs are covered by your health care insurance. You may be obliged to pay the costs, or a part of them, yourself. This depends on your excess amount and how much of this you have already used. For questions about this, please contact your health care insurer.



**‘Yes,
I’m in.’**

Daniëlle (53) ‘I don’t have any doubts about participating. Actually, I have never had any. Even before I had abnormal cells, I participated in the screening. You only have one life. One body. I think, you should look after it well.’



**‘I’m not sure
whether to
participate.’**

Lisa (31) ‘The invitation has been on my desk for a year. It is a privilege, but there is something in me that makes me hesitant. Maybe the fear of something being wrong? The fact that the smear test is uncomfortable, also counts. I really need to cross that threshold.’



**‘Yes,
I’m in.’**

Annerieke (37) ‘I kept putting off making an appointment. I also did not give it priority after my pregnancy. I should have made the time for it sooner. Everything was alright. That’s really good to know.’



**‘No,
I don’t
participate.’**

Judith (46) ‘I have never participated. At first, because I found the smear test uncomfortable. But now, I don’t participate because I estimate my risk as being very low. I don’t smoke, eat healthily. And what if there is something wrong, then what?’



More information

You can use the information in this brochure to make a choice. For more information about the advantages and disadvantages, HPV, cervical cancer, and the screening, please visit www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl.

Do you have any questions, tips, or complaints?

The screening organisations coordinate the screening on behalf of the government.

Do you have any questions, tips, or complaints about the screening? Please contact the screening organisation in your region. You will find the contact details in the invitation letter. The screening organisations have a complaints procedure.

Some of the figures in this brochure are estimations based on screenings in previous years and studies.

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A screening is a free medical examination for early detection of a disease. The government provides three screening programmes for cancer: screenings for cervical cancer, breast cancer, and bowel cancer. These diseases can be detected at an early stage. Even before someone has complaints.

Information in other languages

You can read this information in English/Turkish/Arabic at:

This information is available in English at:

Bu bilgiyi Türkçe olarak şu internet sitesinde okuyabilirsiniz:

يمكنكم قراءة هذه المعلومات باللغة العربية على الموقع:

www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl

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Voor vroegge opsporing van kanker



NEDERLANDSE VERENIGING VOOR
OBSTETRIE & GYNAECOLOGIE



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