



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

For the early detection of cancers

Your invitation for **cervical cancer screening**



Why this population screening?

Every year, around 900 people get cervical cancer. Every year, around 200 people die from this disease. Cervical cancer is most common among women between 30 and 60 years old. That is why we invite these women to take part in this population screening.

We use the population screening to detect if someone is at risk of cervical cancer. Early detection can prevent cervical cancer. People who take part in the population screening are at a lower risk of cervical cancer.

Did you have an HPV vaccination as a teenager?

It is still important that you take part in the population screening. The HPV vaccination protects against the two types of HPV that cause cervical cancer most often. This means that the HPV vaccination gives you better protection against cervical cancer. But it does not give you 100% protection. That is why we are also inviting people who have been vaccinated against HPV for the population screening.



Would you like more information about HPV vaccination and the population screening? Go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl/vertalingen or scan the QR code.

Why this leaflet?

This leaflet gives you information about the cervical cancer screening. This information will help you decide if you want to take part.



What causes cervical cancer?

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

HPV is very common. Nearly all people get HPV at some point in their lives. The body is nearly always able to get rid of the virus on its own. Sometimes, it does not succeed in this. For example, this can happen if the body's immune system is weakened. Taking certain medicines and smoking are some of the things that can weaken your immune system.

If the body fails to get rid of the virus, the cells in the cervix can change. Abnormal cells can change into a precancerous stage of cervical cancer. This is not yet cancer and is easy to treat. The treatment prevents it from turning into cancer.

Precancerous tissue changes sometimes turn into cervical cancer. This happens very slowly. It usually takes 10 to 15 years.

- About 8 out of 10 people get HPV at some point in their lives.
- The virus usually spreads through sexual contact.
- If you have HPV, the risk of getting cervical cancer is still small.

You can take part in two ways

1 Using a self-sampling device at home

You can take part in the population screening at home. You get the self-sampling device from the Centre for Population Screening.

The self-sampling device is an easy way to find out if you have HPV. It comes with instructions. These tell you step by step how to use the self-sampling device. The self-sampling device makes it easy to collect vaginal material yourself at home. You send this to the laboratory. The laboratory will test the self-sampling device for HPV.

The self-sampling device tests for HPV only. If the laboratory detects HPV in the self-sampling device, you must go to your general practitioner (GP) practice for a smear test. The smear test is the only way to find out if you have abnormal cells. For more information about the self-sampling device, go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl/vertalingen.

Go to pages 6 and 7 to read how you can take part using the self-sampling device.

Go to pages 8 and 9 to read how you can take part using a smear test.

2 Going to your GP practice for a smear test

You can make an appointment for a smear test at your GP practice.

The smear test is usually done by a female doctor's assistant. She will ask you a few questions first. Next, you undress from the waist down. You do not need to remove the clothes on your top half. 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 takes a few cells. She puts them into a pot, which she sends to the laboratory. The appointment will take around 10 minutes.

The laboratory will test the smear test for HPV. If this virus is present, they will also immediately check if the smear test contains abnormal cells. The result will determine if a control smear at the GP practice or further assessment by a gynaecologist is needed.

- Have your smear test done on a day when you are not having your period.
- A full bladder or intestine may make you feel uncomfortable while the smear test is being done. It is therefore a good idea to go to the toilet beforehand.



In most practices, the smear test is done by a female doctor's assistant or female GP. If you would like this, but this is not possible at your GP practice, or if you would like to go to a different practice, please contact a different GP practice in person.

1 Taking part using the self-sampling device

1 The self-sampling device

We will send the self-sampling device to your home. The self-sampling device has been designed to be easy to use.



2 Instructions

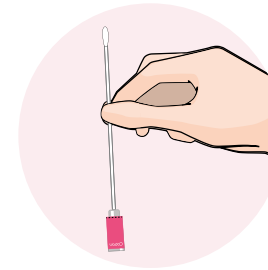
The self-sampling device comes with instructions. These explain clearly how to use the self-sampling device. You can also watch a video at www.bevolkingsonderzoek-baarmoederhalskanker.nl/vertalingen.



3 Using the self-sampling device

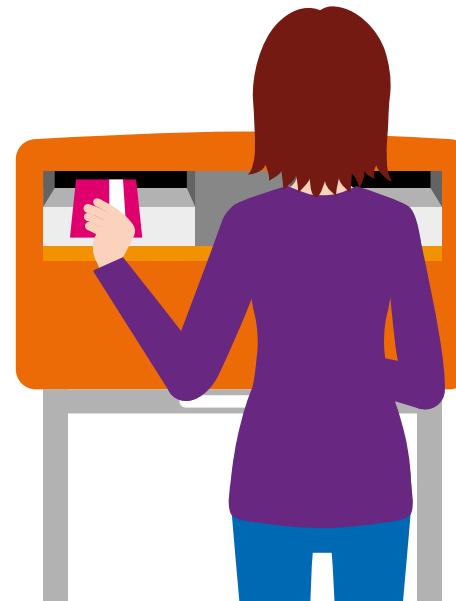
You can use the self-sampling device at home at a time that suits you. You take cells from your vagina yourself.

This will take 20 seconds.



4 Mailing the device

After you have used the self-sampling device, put it in the return envelope. Send the envelope to the laboratory.



5 The result

We will send you a letter with the result within 4 weeks.



2 Taking part using a smear test



1 The appointment

We will send a letter to your home. You can make an appointment for a smear test at your GP practice.

*Bring the letter with you to the appointment.
The stickers are needed for the test.
The appointment will take around 10 minutes.*

2 Questions

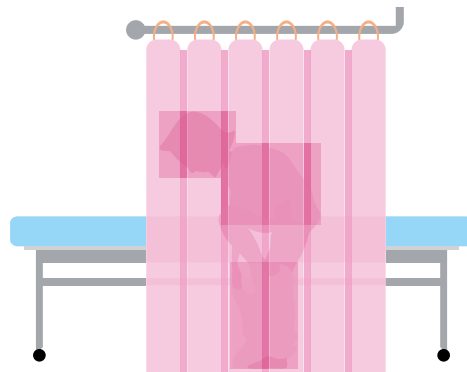
The test is usually done by the doctor's assistant. She will ask you a few questions first.

Please tell her if you feel uncomfortable about the test.



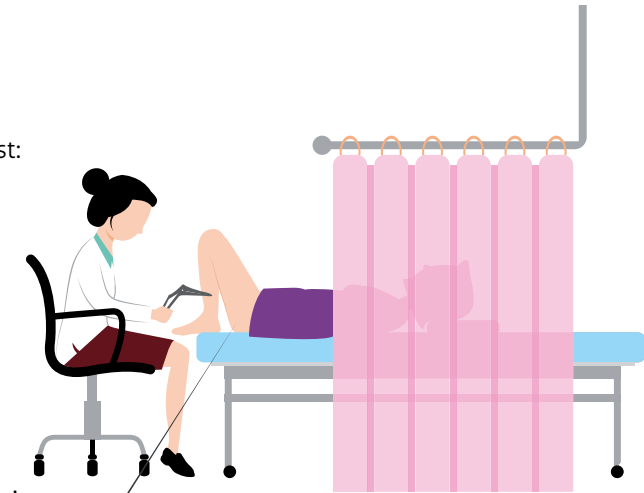
3 Undressing

You then undress from the waist down. You do not need to remove the clothes on your top half.

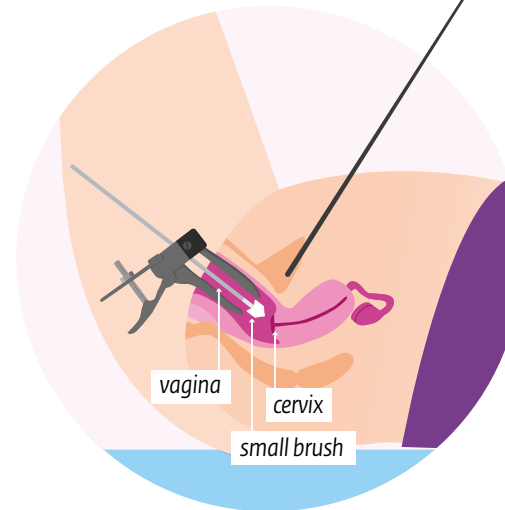


4 The smear test

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



With a small brush, the doctor's assistant takes some endometrium from the cervix.



5 The result

You can get dressed again; the test is done.

We will send you a letter with the result within 4 weeks.



Your own decision

Just like any other medical test, the population screening has advantages and disadvantages. The government organises this population screening because the advantages are greater than the disadvantages. This may be different for you personally.

You decide if you want to take part. You also decide how you want to take part. The population screening is particularly good at detecting precancerous tissue changes. Treatment of precancerous tissues changes can prevent cervical cancer. This is an advantage. The population screening also has disadvantages. The test results from the population screening are not 100% certain. This means that there is always a chance that HPV or abnormal cells have been missed. To make sure, precancerous tissue changes are nearly always treated. They can also go away on their own. In that case, treatment would not have been necessary.

You cannot take part or you would like to take part at a later date

We recommend that you do not take part if you are pregnant or have just given birth. You can take part from 6 weeks after you have given birth. You may have other medical reasons for not taking part or for not taking part right now. For example, if your cervix has been removed. When in doubt, please ask your GP. If you would like to take part later on or would like to opt out, please contact the Centre for Population Screening. You will find the telephone number and email address in the invitation letter.

Contact your GP if you have any symptoms

Are you having any of the following symptoms?

- bleeding immediately after sex;
- bleeding after the menopause, for example if you have not had a period for over a year;
- bleeding between periods;
- abnormal vaginal discharge.

If so, please contact your GP. Your GP can talk to you about the most suitable test in your situation.

What could the result be?

We will send you a letter with the result within 4 weeks. The following results are possible:

No further assessment needed

You do not have HPV. Further assessment is not needed. You may take part in the population screening again in the next round of invitations.



Around 10 out of 100 participants do have HPV. Their cells will need to be checked as well. This can be done immediately if you used a smear test. If you used the self-sampling device, you will need to go for a smear test first.

Control smear by a GP practice needed

It is important that you have a new smear test after 12 months. We can then check your cells again. The Centre for Population Screening will send you an invitation for this.



Further assessment by a gynaecologist needed

Your GP will refer you to a gynaecologist. The gynaecologist will do a further assessment to find out if treatment is needed.



Privacy

To carry out the population screening, we need to process your data. We follow privacy laws when we do this. The municipality has given us your name, address and date of birth. This way, we can send you an invitation. We also process your data for the test and the test results. Your test results can help to improve the population screening. The results from all participants combined give us much information. That is why we also exchange data with research and care facilities. Our privacy statement explains what happens to your data.

What happens with the rest of the bodily material?

Some bodily material is left over after the test. We keep this material for several months to monitor and improve the quality of the population screening. At the end of this period, the material is destroyed or anonymised for scientific research into gynaecological cancer. If the material is used for scientific research, we make sure that the researcher does not know to whom the data or bodily material belong.

You can object

If you do not want your data and/or bodily material to be used for quality analysis or scientific research after the population screening, you can object to the Centre for Population Screening. It is important to do this before you take part in the population screening. You can find the contact details in the letter with this leaflet. For more information about privacy, the privacy statement and how to object, go to www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en/privacy/.

What does the population screening cost?

The smear test for the population screening at your GP practice is free of charge. The self-sampling device is also free. The government pays for the population screening.

A smear test or follow-up assessment by a gynaecologist is not part of the population screening. These costs are paid by your healthcare insurer. You may need to pay the costs, or part of them, yourself. This depends on your excess and how much of it you have already used. If you have any questions about this, please contact your healthcare insurer.



More information

You can use the information in this leaflet to make a decision about taking part. For more information about the advantages and disadvantages, HPV, cervical cancer and the population screening, go to www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl/vertalingen.

Do you have any questions, tips or complaints about the population screening?

Please contact the Centre for Population Screening. The Centre for Population Screening coordinates the population screening on behalf of the government. You will find the contact details in the invitation letter and at www.bevolkingsonderzoeknederland.nl/en/.

The figures in this leaflet are based on population screenings in previous years and studies.





***bevolkings*onderzoek**

A population screening is a free medical examination for early detection of a disease. The government organises three population screening programmes for cancer: for cervical cancer, breast cancer and colorectal cancer. These diseases can be detected early, even before you get symptoms.

We have paid much care and attention to the content of this leaflet. You cannot derive any rights from it.

Information in other languages

You can read this information in Dutch/Turkish/Arabic/Ukrainian/Russian at:
Bu bilgiyi Türkçe olarak şu internet sitesinde okuyabilirsiniz:

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Вы можете прочитать эту информацию на русском языке на веб-сайте:



www.bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl/vertalingen

We wrote this leaflet with help from the Centre for Population Screening, general practitioners (NHG), doctor's assistants (NVDA), gynaecologists (NVOG), medical microbiologists (NVMM), pathologists (NVVP), the Dutch Cancer Society and Olijf Foundation.



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