



# Reviewing your cervical screening history

## Patient information leaflet

- We know that this is a difficult time for you and naturally you will be concerned about your treatment and future health.
- 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 helps lower the chance of getting cervical cancer. Regular screening is the best way to find changes in the cervix early, but no test is perfect.
- Cervical screening has many steps that help find and treat unhealthy cells on the cervix. This is done to stop cervical cancer from developing.
- Sometimes, even if everything is done correctly, cervical cancer can still develop. This doesn't mean the screening didn't work, but it might mean something didn't go as it should during one of the steps. By reviewing your past tests, we can check if anything could have been done differently.

### What does the review involve?

- Reviews are an important part of making sure the cervical screening program works well. They are a normal part of the process. By looking at each case, we can make the program better and learn more about how cancers start and how to find them.
- A group of clinicians will review your cervical screening history and will check the letters sent to you inviting you for your screening tests, your result letters, and any previous medical investigations related to cervical screening. They will decide whether your screening history meets national guidance.
- Please fill in the form below, stating whether you would like to know the result of the review of your previous tests and other relevant medical investigations, and return it to the address shown on the form. We can then arrange an appointment for you to talk with a Doctor.



### **What will the review show?**

- In most cases, the review will show that the correct procedures have been followed and that you received the correct 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, fill in the form below and return it to the address provided. Your Doctor will let you know when the results are available. They can then arrange to discuss the results with you.

### **What if I do not 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 hospital Doctor, who will discuss the review with you.

### **What if I do not want to know the results of the review?**

- It is completely up to you to decide whether you want to know the results of the review.
- This will not make any difference to your care.

### **Can my family ask for the results if I do not want to know?**

- No, unless you give permission, we cannot give your relatives access to any 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 improvements 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 very 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.

## Frequently asked questions

### 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 you want or do not 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 4,500 lives a year nationally
- Regular screening is the best way to detect early changes to the cervix.

## More information

If you have any more questions about your referral or treatment, please contact:

**Whittington Health NHS Trust Colposcopy Department**

**Ground Floor, Jenner Building**

**Magdala Avenue, London N19 5NF**

**Phone: 020 7288 5118**



## Your notes or questions

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

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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**FORM TO TELL US IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW**

I do/do not (delete as appropriate) wish to know the results of my cervical screening history review.

If I choose not to know the results of the review at present, I understand that I can change my mind at any time.

Signature .....

Name in Block Capitals .....

Date .....

Please return the signed form to a member of your treating team or post it to:

Miss Theresa Freeman-Wang  
Miss Ayanthi Gunasekera  
Joint Cervical Screening Programme Lead  
Women's Health Administrative Office  
Jenner Building, Ground Floor  
Whittington Health NHS Trust  
Magdala Avenue  
London N19 5NF

