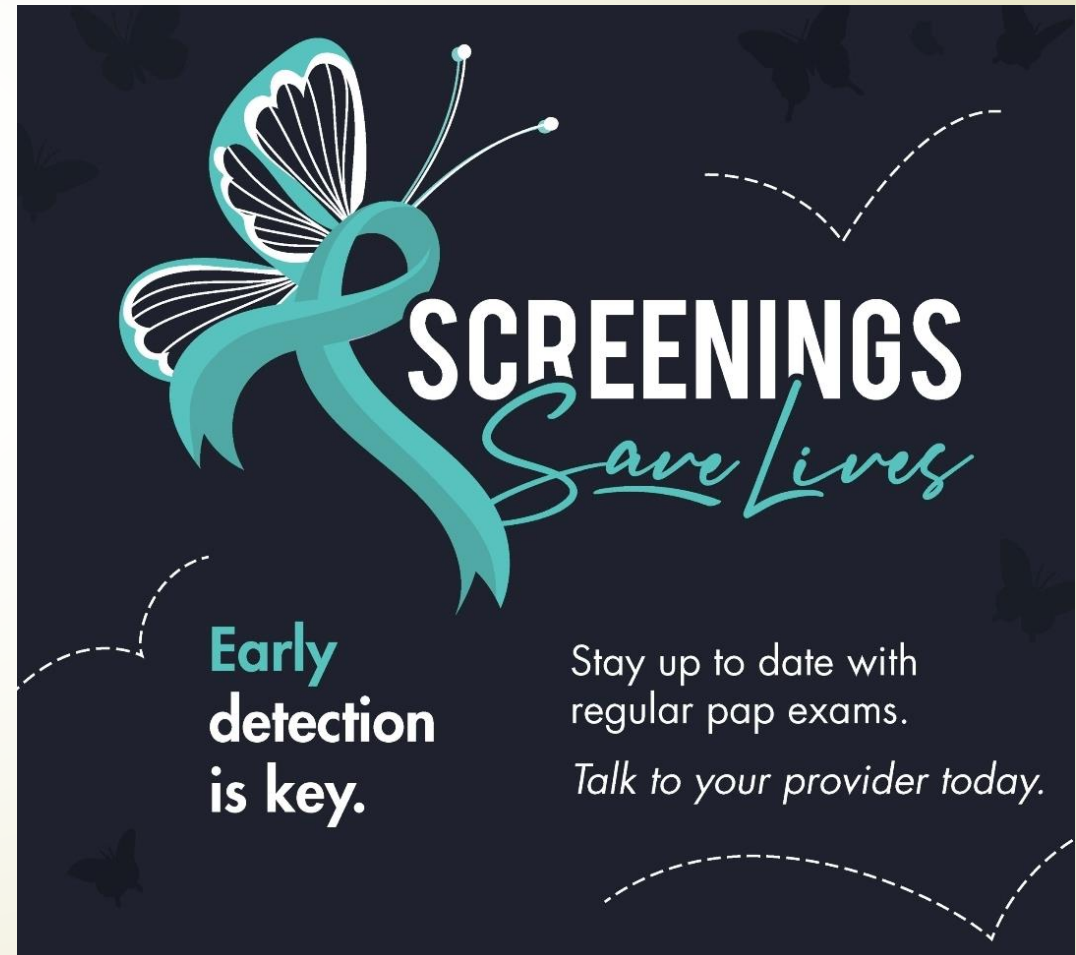


# Challenges for cervical screening:



Did you know...

Cervical Cancer is the 4th leading  
cause of cancer death in women  
worldwide

Call CAMO today @ 210-916-9900 and schedule an appointment with your  
provider to discuss how early screening can save your life!

January is Cervical Cancer  
Awareness Month

Woman's Age	How often should a woman have a Pap test?
under 21 years old	No testing needed
21-30 years old	Pap test <b>every 3 years</b>
30-65 years old	Pap test <b>every 3 years</b> or Pap and HPV <b>every 5 years</b>
65 years old or older	No testing needed

## Why do I need a cervical screening?

Having cervical screening lowers your chances of getting cervical cancer. Screening found abnormal cells so they can be removed before they become cancer. HPV is found on the skin around the whole genital area and can be spread through any type of sexual activity.



# Barriers to cervical screening:

There is a broad and complex range of reasons why women find cervical screening difficult. . We call these reasons barriers because they often factor into someone's decision not to attend.

Barriers can vary hugely between different groups and communities.

It is important to be aware there are lots of reasons patients may avoid cervical screening and that those reasons may not always be obvious.

It will be very helpful for all staff to understand this, including reception staff, nurses and doctors.



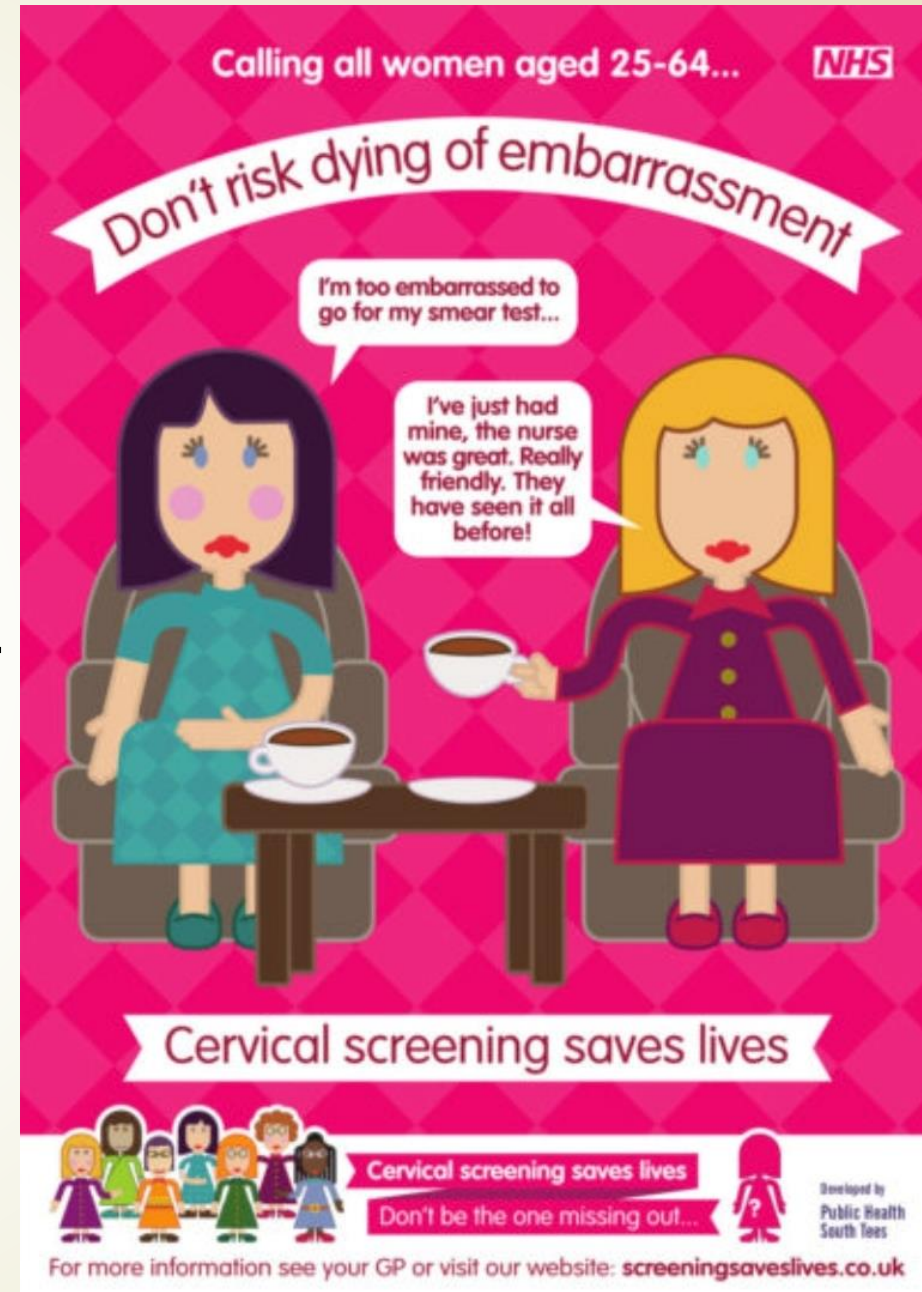


- “I’m too embarrassed to go for cervical screening”

This can be especially true if it is someone’s first test.

## What we can do?

- ☐ Make sure the consultation room is as comfortable as possible.
- ☐ You can suggest a patient wear something like long skirt or brings a piece of clothing to cover up. **This may help them feel less exposed.**
- 
- ☐ Hang “do not disturb” sign on the door.
- ☐ Cervical screening drop-in clinics, with refreshments, information stands, and an informal atmosphere.



- **“screening is painful”**

There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- ☐ Menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms, such as vaginal dryness.
- ☐ Veganism.
- ☐ Anxiety, including a previous bad experience, worry about the test or fear of results.
- ☐ Female genital mutilation, where the genital area has been cut.
- ☐ Using a speculum that is too big.
- ☐ Not using any or enough lubrication.



## What can you do?

- ☐ Try to encourage your patient to talk about their concerns so you can understand their fears and past experiences.
- ☐ Use a small speculum.
- ☐ If someone has vaginal dryness, prescribing oestrogen cream in advance can help with lubrication.
- ☐ Suggest ways to cope with their anxiety-linked pain, including breathing exercises, listening to music or a podcast for distraction, or having a partner or friend in the room.





- “cervical screening isn’t relevant for me”

There are a few myths that mean some women think cervical screening isn’t relevant for them, including that:

- ☐ Cervical screening isn’t necessary after menopause.
- ☐ They haven’t had sex for a long time.

However, we know that HPV- the main cause of cervical cancer- can be dormant in the body for years and may become active again, which cervical screening can help detect.

The media also sometimes focused on cervical cancer as a “**young person cancer**”. While 30 to 45 is the peak age for being diagnosed with cervical cancer, **any women can be affected at any age.**





## What can you do?

- Develop resources such as posters that specifically target this age group.
- Work with non-health care partners in the areas that have links with this age group to increase awareness. For example, local community groups or hairdressers.
- Make sure patients have the informations they need to understand cervical screening and assess their risk. We could direct them to the patient information about HPV & cervical screening on the websites or print it out for patients to read at home.



## • “I am scared about what my results will be”

☐ It is natural for the patient to worry about their cervical screening results. Sometimes this is exacerbated by myths, including that cervical screening is a test of cervical cancer.

## What can you do?

☐ Explain to patients that cervical screening isn't a test of cancer- **it's a way of preventing cancer from development.**

☐ Let your patient know that you & other staff will be there if they have any questions when they get their results.

## Understanding your Cervical Screening Test results



This guide helps you understand your Cervical Screening Test results.

Your doctor or nurse will discuss your results and the next steps with you.

This is a good time to ask any questions or let them know if you are feeling anxious or worried about your results.

### What does the Cervical Screening Test look for?

The Cervical Screening Test looks for the human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

HPV is so common that many people have it at some point in their lives and never know it, as there are usually no symptoms.

But if HPV stays in our bodies for a long time, it can cause problems that may lead to cervical cancer. This usually takes 10 to 15 years.

### What does my test result mean?

Your health worker will talk to you about your Cervical Screening Test results, and will answer any questions you have.



- **“ I can’t find the right time to go for a test”**

- It can difficult to get to an appointment at time that suits. This was even worse at the outbreak of COVID-19. Sometimes patients have communities, including childcare or work, which clash with available appointments.
- Cervical screening will understandably not usually be as much as a priority as these other communities, so it can easily fall off someone’s to –do list.

### **What can you do?**

- If there is capacity, consider organizing some evening or Saturday morning drop-in clinics for patients who work long hours during the week.
- Signpost the patient to any local clinics that offer cervical screening appointments at more flexible hours.



**Cervical Cancer  
Education  
Program**





- **“my physical disability makes it hard or impossible for me to attend”**

- ☐ Lack of wheelchair access.
- ☐ Problems getting onto examination for the test.
- ☐ Previous misunderstanding, dismissal and negative experiences of cervical screening.

## What can you do?

- ☐ If wheelchair access or equipment at your hospital is not suitable, refer the patient to another hospital.
- ☐ Discuss the realistic to offer home visits for those who are housebound.



- **“the test is intrusive and traumatic”**

❑ Anyone who's experienced trauma, such as sexual violence or previous negative experience with health tests, may find cervical screening distressing or triggering.

## What can you do?

- ❑ At the booking stage, allow an extra time for the appointment so the nurse can explain the procedure step by step.
- ❑ Let the patient see the equipment that will be used.
- ❑ Make sure the patient know that they can ask for the test to stop at any point.



- **“I don’t understand what I am being invited for”**

- ☐ Low or uneducated females.
- ☐ Some people with learning disability- the invitation letter or explanation about cervical screening may be not accessible for them.

## **What can you do?**

- ☐ Offer easy read version of invitation letters and other resources.
- ☐ Offer extra time during cervical screening appointments, so the sample taker can explain the test and answer any questions.

**NHS**

**We know attending for a smear test can seem unpleasant. We offer:**

- Bring a friend for support
- Get results within 14 days
- Back to back “buddy” appointments available
- Request a female to carry out the test
- Fully trained clinical staff
- Text message appointment reminders

**Is your GP or sexual health service a...**

**NO FEAR service?**

reduceyourrisk reduce\_your\_risk

**Cervical screening saves lives**

**Don't be the one missing out...**



- **“do I need a pap smear when I am pregnant”**

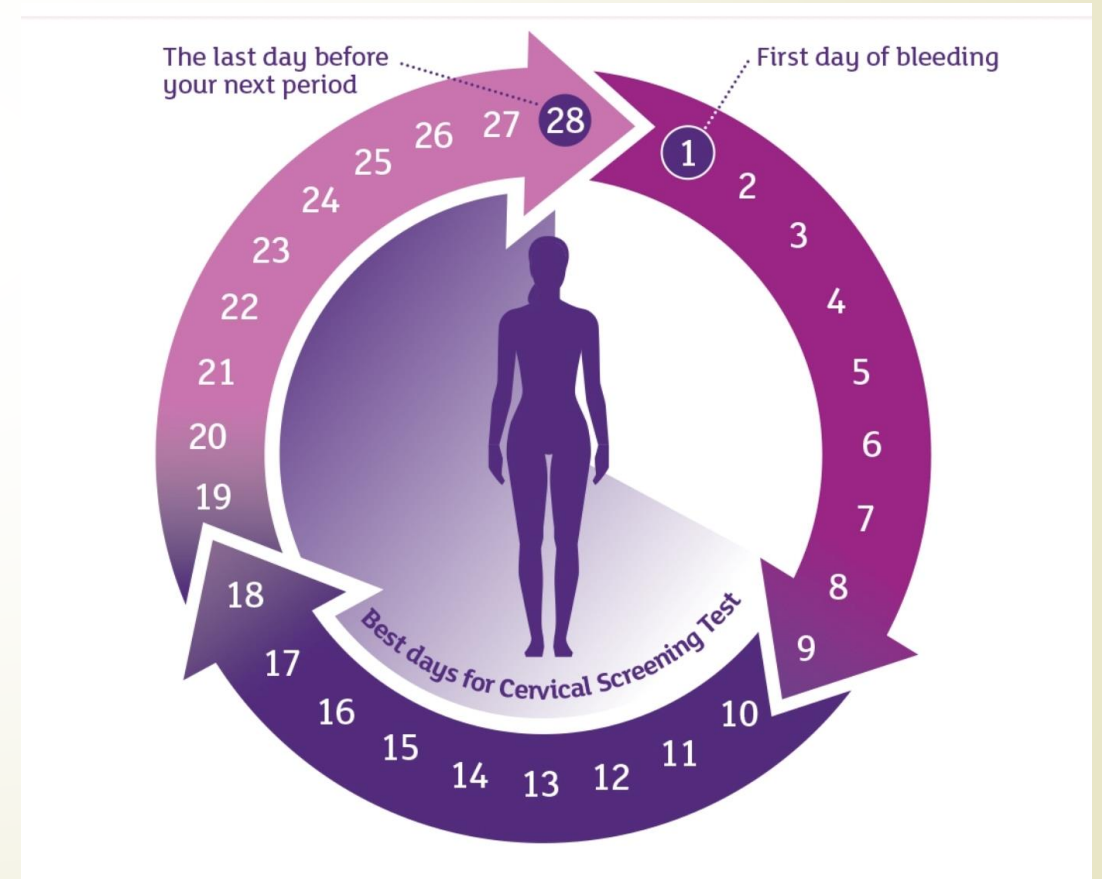
- ☐ Pap smear while pregnant is safe for you and your patient.
- ☐ Any suggestion that it might cause a miscarriage is false.
- ☐ It is normal to experience minor bleeding after the test, because blood flow to the uterus increases, which causes the cervix to bleed more easily when touched.



- **“can I get a pap smear while period”**

- ☐ Technically, you can get the test during period, but it is still better to get one if you're not menstruating.

- ☐ The presence of blood may alter the accuracy of the results, especially if you have a heavy flow.



## Why we should do cervical screening?

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer. Cervical screening is not a test for cancer, it's a test to help prevent cancer

