

To:

- ICBs
 - chief executives
 - medical directors
 - Primary care leads
 - Screening leads
- GP practice managers
- Primary Care Networks
- NHS England regional public health commissioning teams
- Integrated sexual health services
- Colposcopy and associated histology services
- Cervical screening laboratories
- Cervical Screening Administration Service
- Local authority directors of public health

NHS England
Wellington House
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11 June 2025

Dear colleagues

I am writing to inform you about some important changes to the NHS Cervical Screening Programme:

1. extending screening intervals for 25-49 year olds from 1 July 2025
2. digitalisation of cervical screening correspondence

1. Extending screening intervals

From 1 July 2025, routine cervical screening intervals will be extended from 3 to 5 years for participants aged 25-49 who test negative after attending cervical screening on or after this date.

The NHS Cervical Screening Programme saves thousands of lives every year by checking for high-risk Human Papilloma Virus (hrHPV) which causes almost all cervical cancers. In England, women and people with a cervix are currently invited every 3 years between the ages of 25-49 and every 5 years if aged 50-64 years.

In December 2019, HPV primary screening was fully implemented in England. This is a more sensitive and accurate test than the previous ‘smear’ test, which only looked for cervical cell changes. HPV testing is the best way to find out at an early stage who is at higher risk of developing the cervical cell changes that over time could potentially lead to cervical cancer if left untreated. This enables us to offer a more personalised approach to cervical cancer prevention based on an individual’s risk.

Studies have shown that if a person tests negative for hrHPV they are extremely unlikely to go on to develop cervical cancer within the next 10 years. A study¹ in England, published by King’s College London, showed that 5-year screening intervals are as safe as 3-year intervals; the same number of cancers will be prevented and less frequent cervical screening tests are needed.

The UK National Screening Committee (UKNSC) reviewed all the robust scientific evidence and recommended a change to a 5-year screening interval for participants aged 25-49 years who test negative for hrHPV at their routine screen. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has accepted this recommendation.

Next test due dates will not be changed; individuals will be invited at the interval in which they were advised of at the time of their last test.

This change will be clearly communicated to the public through media, social media and the NHS.uk and gov.uk websites. We are working closely with charities CRUK and Eve Appeal to support those who have questions.

There will be no change to the clinical pathway for those testing positive for HPV. Where there are no cell changes, they will be invited for screening again in 1 year. If cell changes are found alongside a positive HPV test, they will be referred directly to a hospital clinic for a colposcopy to check the cervix more closely. An individual will only move onto a 5 year screening interval after this when they meet the clinical criteria.

For further detail on how this will affect participants, and to support services to answer enquiries, please see the accompanying FAQ. More detailed information can be found in the [Extended Screening Interval Clinical Pathway Guidance document](#). The suite of existing e-learning training modules for the NHS Cervical Screening Programme has been updated to incorporate the extended screening intervals pathway.

Actions for sample takers, GP practice managers and screening providers:

¹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/377/bmj-2021-068776>

- ensure any patient-facing staff are aware of the changes so they can support individuals with any questions. Staff can reassure people that invitations will be sent automatically at the appropriate interval
- register for NHS England's [NHS Cervical Screening Programme webinar](#) on **12 June at 12pm** to learn more about extended screening intervals and to ask any questions you may have
- sample takers are asked to inform participants of the interval change during their appointments **on or after 1 July 2025**

2. Digital correspondence

The NHS Cervical Screening Programme has introduced [digital invitations and reminders](#) via the NHS App. This means quicker and more convenient access to cervical screening invites when screening is due. For those where a digital invitation isn't possible, a letter will be posted as a backup. All invitations will guide participants to book appointments in the usual way. We would encourage everyone to download the [NHS App](#) and enable notifications. This digital transformation supports the NHS commitment to put patients in control of their own healthcare, making it easier to manage appointments and health needs.

I would like to thank staff involved in delivering NHS Cervical Screening Programme services for playing an important part in ensuring these changes are communicated to women and people with a cervix coming forward for screening.

Continuing to encourage all those eligible remains central to our ambition to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040, and we are grateful for the continued efforts to support this aim.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Amanda Doyle

National Director of Primary Care,
Community, Vaccinations and Screening
NHS England

Enc. Communications toolkit, including an FAQ, on extended screening intervals to support sample takers and service providers.