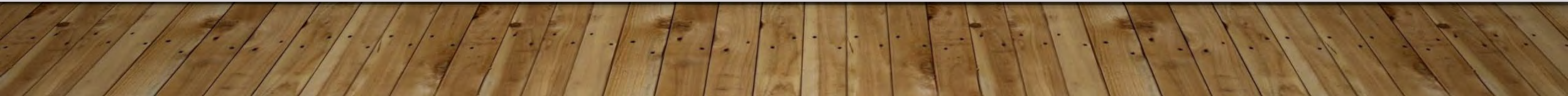


CERVICAL CANCER

HOW TAKING PART IN SCREENING CAN PROTECT YOU & YOUR LOVED ONES

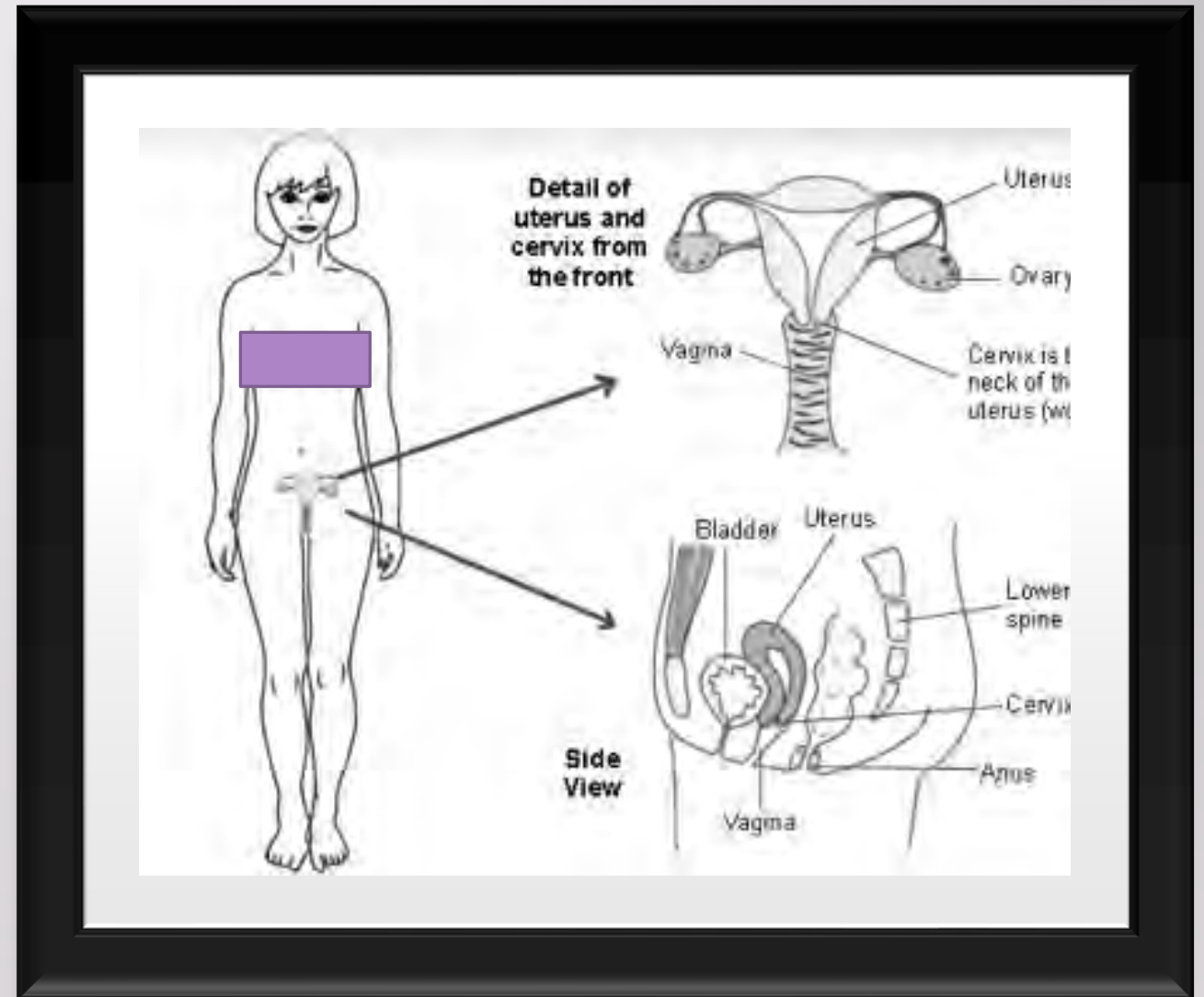


TODAYS CONVERSATION AT A GLANCE ...

- What is a smear test?
- Why is it important to attend for my smear test?
- What is cervical cancer and what symptoms does it cause?
- Are women from certain ethnic groups less likely to come for their smear test?
- Common misunderstandings about cervical screening – setting the record straight
- Time for questions & sharing ideas to improve uptake

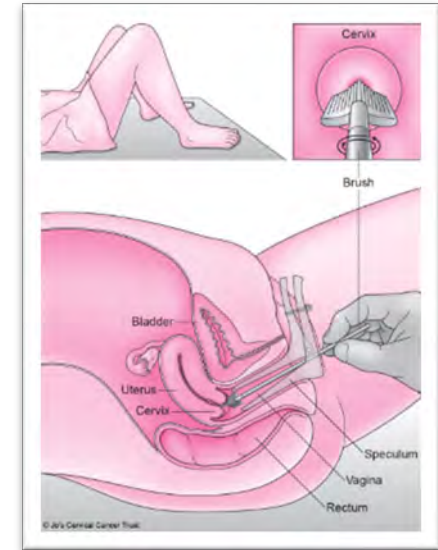
WHAT IS A CERVICAL SMEAR TEST?

- Free health check available via the NHS
- Checks for HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) carriage & abnormal cervical cell changes
- Now for some anatomy →



HOW IS A SMEAR TEST DONE?

- Usually at your GP surgery by a trained nurse or doctor
- It only takes a few mins!
- The clinician will talk you through the steps
- Give you time to ask any questions you have
- Check if you want a chaperone
- You'll be asked to lie on an examination bed
- You remove your underwear
- You are given a paper sheet to cover your lower half
- You can lie on your back or on your side with your legs bent up
- Once in the right position, a speculum is gently placed into the vagina using lubricant
- Once inside the vagina, the clinician gently positions the speculum to see your cervix
- A small, soft brush is then gently swept over the surface of the cervix
- The cervical cell sample collected is placed a small plastic container of liquid
- And that's it! The speculum is gently removed & you'll have privacy to redress
- The clinician will explain how and when you should get your results



HOW HAVE THINGS CHANGED WITH COVID?

GP Practices are still inviting patients to attend for their cervical screening

The cervical screening test itself is the same

But your visit to the GP surgery might be a little different

This is because your GP surgery has safety measures in place to make sure you, and their staff, are protected against coronavirus

Expect that the clinician taking the smear will wear PPE e.g. mask +/- gown

Expect that you will be asked to wear a mask (unless you are exempt)

Please don't attend for a smear test if you have symptoms of coronavirus & rearrange your appt until you have recovered

WATCH THIS SPACE: SELF-SWAB SCREENING

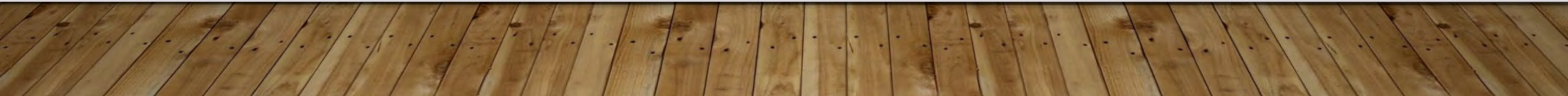
- In other parts of the world cervical screening is performed by self swab
- Stats show that it's a reliable test and acceptable to participants as they can take their sample in the privacy of their own home
- London recently piloted this method of screening (2021)
- Formal results are awaited but it is likely that self sampling will become part of the national cervical screening programme in the future
- This would mean the majority of women would test themselves and only those who test +ve for HPV would need to proceed to a smear test (est. 13%)
- Self-sampling improves screening uptake & can prevent more cancers



YouScreen
Cervical Screening Made Easier

HPV – WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT

- HPV testing is now the first part of the cervical screening programme
- HPV stands for [human papillomavirus](#)
- HPV has many types, but it is the high risk ones that can cause changes to the cells of your cervix
- **Why?** Around [99.7%](#) of cervical cancer cases are caused by persistent genital HPV infection.
- Testing for HPV means we can identify who is most at risk of developing cell changes or cervical cancer. This means we can give the right people the care they need as early as possible
- If high-risk [HPV](#) is not found, you won't need any follow-up tests
- If high-risk HPV is found, the same sample will be checked for any changes in the cells of your cervix. If there are cell changes, you will be invited for a [colposcopy](#) to have a closer look at your cervix. If there aren't any cell changes, you will be invited back for cervical screening in one year. That's because you're at higher risk of developing cell changes in the future if you have high-risk HPV.
- Only about 1 in 500 people infected with HPV go on to get cancer



HPV VACCINE

- HPV vaccines were introduced in the UK for girls in 2008 and for boys in 2018
- Helps to prevent cervical cancer and anal/penile cancer
- HPV vaccine works in two doses for most people, though in some circumstances three may be required
- The first dose is in year 8 at school at age 12-13
- The second is done between 6 and 24 months later
- If you miss the first dose at age 12, you can get it at any age until 25, or until 45 for MSM

WHO IS OFFERED A SMEAR TEST?

- You will usually be offered a smear test every 3 yrs or 5 yrs if you are aged over 50
- The NHS will contact you when it is time for your test if you are
 - aged between 25 to 64 years old
 - registered as female with a GP
- NB: If you are a trans man or non-binary person and have a cervix, you should have screening too. But, you may not be sent a smear test invitation if you are registered as male with your GP. Please tell your GP if you want to have cervical screening, so they can arrange regular tests for you

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ATTEND FOR MY SMEAR?

Finding and treating abnormal cell
changes can prevent cervical cancer from developing

99.8% Cervical Cancer Cases are Preventable!

The sooner these changes are found the
better the long term outcome

WHAT'S THE RISK IF I DON'T COME FOR MY SMEAR?

Cervical cancer is one of the few types of cancer which can be detected and stopped before it begins

Early changes can be detected in the cervix which indicate that cancer may develop & can be treated

Since screening started both cases of cervical cancer have dropped dramatically and deaths due to it

Cancer of the cervix is now only the 14th most common cancer in the UK

In other parts of the world it is the 3rd or 4th most common cancer

This is because of our screening programme

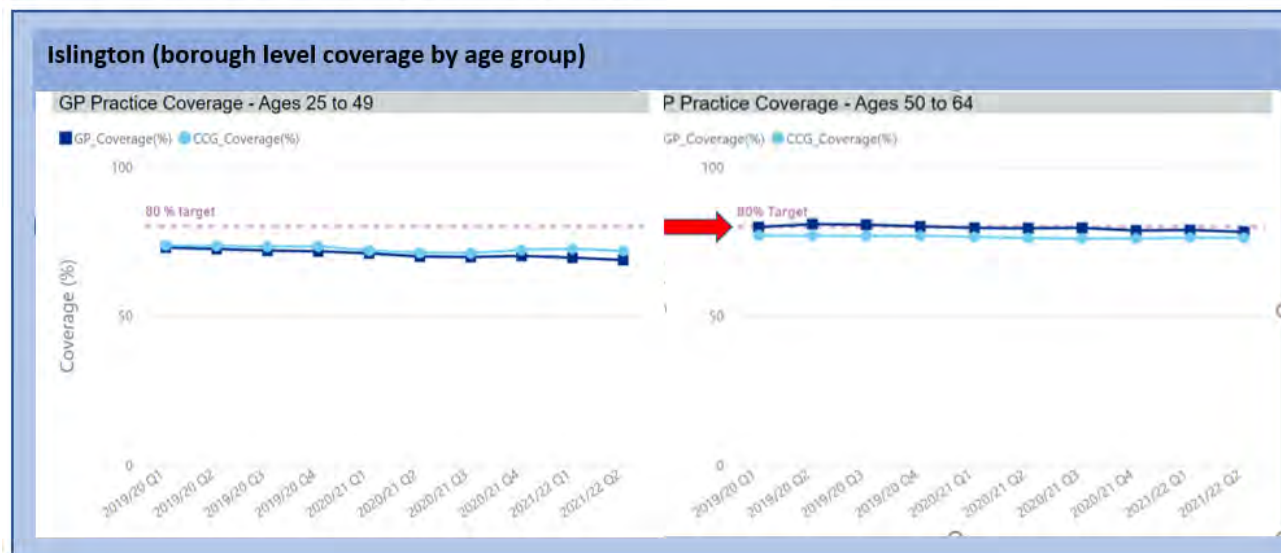
There are still about 3000 cases of cervical cancer in the UK each year – most of those are in women who did not attend for their screening

> 4,000 people are prevented from developing cervical cancer every year due to cervical screening

SMEAR UPTAKE IN UK & ISLINGTON COMPARED TO TARGET

Data available at:
<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/cervical-screening-programme/cervical-screening-programme-coverage-statistics-management-information>

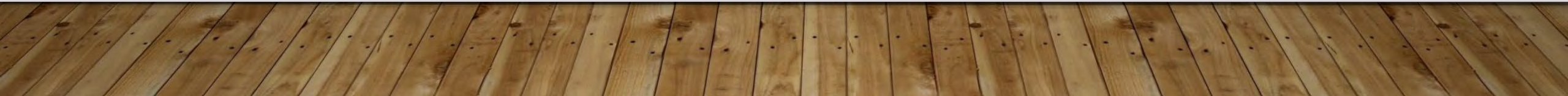
Cervical screening activity has been high since the programme restarted in June 2021 but still below national target



ARE WOMEN FROM CERTAIN ETHNIC GROUPS LESS LIKELY TO COME FOR THEIR SMEAR?

- Since the 1990s cases of cervical cancer have [decreased by 25 per cent](#) in women in the UK
- But uptake of vaccination & screening services show disparities in the proportion of ethnic minority groups to their white British counterparts
- A study by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust found that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women are both less likely to attend screening and less likely to receive the HPV vaccination, both of which increase their long-term risk of cervical cancer
- BAME women were more likely than white women to say they had never attended a screening (12% vs 8%)
- [A third more BAME women](#) (12 per cent) compared to white women (eight per cent) have not attended screening when eligible
- 30 per cent of Asian women reported to not know what a cervical screening was (compared to 9% against 91% of white women aged 20-65)
- Only 53% of BAME women aged 55-65 think screening is a necessary health test against 67% of white women in the same age range
- Twice as many BAME women as white women said better knowledge about the test and why it is important would encourage them to attend (30% against 14%)
- These disparities must be addressed, both within the realm of cervical cancer cases and wider health inequalities.

[Ref: bme_survey_website_final.pdf \(jostrust.org.uk\)](#)



COMMON
MISUNDERSTANDINGS
ABOUT SCREENING
– SETTING THE RECORD
STRAIGHT

Myth: Cervical screening is a test for cancer

Many women and people with a cervix worry that they will be told they have cancer after going for their smear test – this is extremely unlikely. Only 0.5-2% of women on average have an abnormal result.

Myth: An abnormal result means you have cancer

An abnormal result does not mean you have cancer. It means you have changes in the cells covering your cervix, but these changes are almost invariably not cancer. The cells may go back to normal by themselves. But in some women, these changes could develop into cancer in the future if not monitored and/or treated

Myth: Cervical screening is very painful

Cervical screening might feel a little strange or uncomfortable, but it should not be painful. If you are worried about this or it has previously been painful for you please speak to the clinician taking your test to discuss how it might be made more comfortable for you

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT SCREENING – SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Myth: You don't need to be screened if you've had the HPV vaccine

In 2008, the UK implemented an HPV vaccine programme for teenage girls. While the HPV vaccine is very effective & prevents lots of cases of cervical cancer it does not protect against every type of HPV which is why it's still important to attend your test

Myth: Cervical screening is only for people who have had sex

Some people believe that cervical cancer is solely caused by sex, but this is a myth. Even if you don't have sex, you could still be at risk of cervical cancer so it is important to get screened.

However, it is true that HPV is most commonly transmitted during sexual intercourse and sexual activities. Therefore, people who have or have had sex are at risk of developing cervical cancer. You could still be at risk if you have not had any sexual contact for years.

Myth: People will know I've been for a cervical screening

Screening is confidential – but if you are worried about a letter being sent to your home please speak to your nurse or GP about your options rather than avoid screening

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT SCREENING – SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Myth: Cervical screening checks for other types of cancer

20% of people mistakenly believe cervical screening can detect ovarian cancer, according to the charity [Target Ovarian Cancer](#). Cervical screening doesn't protect against other cancers or conditions such as [sexually transmitted infections](#) (STIs)

Myth: Cervical screening takes away your virginity

Virginity is about a sexual or intimate experience, whereas cervical screening is a health test. People may worry about their hymen 'breaking' during a [smear test](#), but the hymen is not a good indication of whether someone has been sexually active. It may not be intact even if someone has never had penetrative sex. Additionally, cervical screening should not be forceful enough to break any part of the anatomy, according to Jo's Trust.

Myth: Lesbian, gay or bisexual women don't need cervical screening

Lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) women are as entitled to cervical screening as any other eligible person. Remember that any genital skin-to-skin contact can spread HPV – not just penetration with a penis. So LGB patients can still get HPV, even if they've never had sex with a man.

HOW CAN I GET A SMEAR?

REGISTER WITH A GP, MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS ARE CORRECT & YOU WILL BE INVITED AUTOMATICALLY. IF YOU THINK YOUR SMEAR IS DUE & YOU HAVEN'T HAD A LETTER CHECK WITH YOUR GP

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF CERVICAL CANCER

Do you know the symptoms of **cervical cancer?**

The most common symptoms include:



Vaginal bleeding that is unusual for you – after menopause, between regular periods or after sex



Unexplained pain in your lower back or between your hip bones (pelvis)



Pain or discomfort during sex



Changes to vaginal discharge

These symptoms are not usually cervical cancer, but it's important to contact your GP and get them checked out. Don't wait for cervical screening (a smear test).

If your GP asks you to go into the surgery, don't worry – they have measures in place to keep you safe from coronavirus.

TIME FOR QUESTIONS & SHARING IDEAS

- Has this been helpful?
- Have you learnt anything you didn't already know?
- Any questions?
- Any ideas for us on how to increase smear uptake locally?



THANK YOU

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE?

VISIT THESE WEBSITES : JOSTRUST.ORG.UK, [CERVICAL SCREENING - MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT](#), [CERVICAL SCREENING | CERVICAL SMEAR TEST | PATIENT](#), [CERVICAL CANCER STATISTICS](#) | [CANCER RESEARCH UK](#)

FURTHER SUPPORT AND ADVICE AVAILABLE AT JO'S TRUST FREE HELPLINE: 0808 802 8000

