



22 May 2019

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PQ 20922/19: To ask the Minister for Health the average time for the release of results to patients under the various screening programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy

I refer to the above parliamentary question.

The National Screening Service, now part of the Health Service Executive (HSE), encompasses four national population based screening programmes:

- BreastCheck - The National Breast Screening Programme
- CervicalCheck - The National Cervical Screening Programme
- BowelScreen - The National Bowel Screening Programme
- Diabetic RetinaScreen - The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme

The HSE National Screening Service does not generally produce average waiting times for the release of results. Instead, it measures waiting time results against pre-defined targets.

Results for BreastCheck, BowelScreen and Diabetic RetinaScreen are displayed in the following table:

Programme	Factor	Target	Result in 2018
BreastCheck	Women receive their mammogram results within three working weeks	>90%	99%
BowelScreen	Men and women receive their home test results within four working weeks	≥90%	100%
Diabetic RetinaScreen	Men and women get their diabetic retinopathy screening results within three working weeks	≥95%	96%

In relation to waiting times for cervical screening tests (smear tests) carried out under CervicalCheck, the HSE is acutely conscious of the regrettable length of time that many women continue to experience for their results, which can be up to 33 weeks, and in some cases, longer.

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála National Screening Service

We are very sorry for these delays, which are due to the unprecedented demand on CervicalCheck's laboratory services in 2018 following very understandable concerns about cervical screening. In the context of these delays, providing an average waiting for smear test results would not provide a realistic indicator of the current waiting times experienced by women.

We continue to make every effort to improve waiting times for smear test results by engaging closely with our laboratory providers and trying to seek additional capacity.

In particular, we have been working closely with the laboratory that has the largest number of smear tests waiting to be processed, MedLab Pathology (MLP), to process all outstanding tests as a matter of priority. Steady progress is being made in this regard, with the overall number of outstanding smear tests reducing.

Nonetheless, we again apologise for the delays experienced by women and acknowledge the distress and anxiety this is causing. We remain committed to continuing in our efforts to process all outstanding tests as soon as is possible.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Frances McNamara
Head of Screening
National Screening Service

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Giob
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGHTÁSTÁLA CEIRBEACAS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Puláige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic
RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Briste de Dhoibreach
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme