



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála National Screening Service

23 October 2019

Niamh Smyth, TD
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PQ 42678/19

To ask the Minister for Health the timeframe women in counties Cavan, Monaghan and Meath are waiting on smear test and CervicalCheck results to return to their general practitioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy

I refer to the above parliamentary question.

Since last year, we have reduced waiting times by working closely with our laboratory providers and sourcing additional capacity from public and private providers. As a result, the number of CervicalCheck screening tests waiting to be processed has declined steadily in recent months.

The programme should typically have approximately 23,000 samples in progress at any one time, with turnaround targets of 4-6 weeks. As of 13 October, the number of samples being processed was 21,180, with an average turnaround time down to 5.3 weeks.

For the three counties that you asked about, Cavan, Meath and Monaghan, the average turnaround times were 4 weeks, 4.1 weeks and 3.5 weeks respectively.

Our priority is to sustain these turnaround times, to ensure that women receive their results in a reasonable time period, and to continue to improve and strengthen our cervical screening programme.

Since CervicalCheck started in 2008, more than 3 million cervical screening tests have been completed, the number of women in Ireland who develop cervical cancer has fallen, and more than 100,000 cases of abnormal cervical cells have been detected and treated. Many of these could have developed into cervical cancer if not detected through screening.

However, like all screening tests, cervical screening is not perfect and it has limitations. A screening test is not the same as a diagnostic test; i.e. a test that is offered to people who have symptoms, or to those identified to be at risk.

While screening can detect a disease, or signs of a disease, at an early stage, it has limitations. It will not always pick up changes or signs of a disease (a false negative result), and in some cases it will pick up changes or signs which turn out to be benign (a false positive result). People can also develop the disease in between negative screenings.

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BreastCheck
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Ciock
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NAISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CEIBHEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Pulóg
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic
RetinaScreen
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púilíní
The National Diabetic Retina Screening Programme



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These limitations should be balanced with the benefits of screening, which in Ireland has saved many lives. CervicalCheck has contributed to the reduction in the rates of cervical cancer among women in Ireland.

In relation to your specific question, I attach below a table showing the number of cervical tests that are awaiting results, by week and by county. The data is accurate as of 13 October 2019.

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

Yours sincerely

Celine Fitzgerald
Interim Chief Executive
National Screening Service

Weeks Awaiting Smear Test Results	Cavan	Meath	Monaghan
1	7	42	10
2	59	167	49
3	63	236	55
4	71	180	53
5	30	152	31
6	7	47	8
7	2	11	7
8	1	5	1
9	0	2	0
10+	5	30	0
Total Individuals	245	872	214

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