



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

10 December 2020

Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor  
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Our Ref: HM/Communications

**PQ42513/20: To ask the Minister for Health the status of the resumption of cancer screening services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

I have addressed each cancer screening programme in turn below. The focus of our programmes' restart is to achieve a maximum screening invitation rate that is compatible with a safe follow-up assessment and treatment capacity within the health service.

### **BreastCheck**

Breast screening resumed nationally on 27 October 2020. During the pause in screening BreastCheck had been supporting the symptomatic service, assessing and treating women of all ages with known symptoms of breast cancer.

Invitation letters are being sent first to those who had their appointments cancelled in March, followed by invitations for routine screening. It is important that people come for breast screening when they receive their invitation.

BreastCheck operates a two-yearly screening round. Owing to the pause in screening and COVID-19 preventative measures, it may take us longer to complete the current round. While we do not wish for any increase in the period between screens, screening will still be within European norms.

### **CervicalCheck**

CervicalCheck will have issued an invitation letter to every person due a test in 2020, by end of December 2020. The programme will then issue letters of invitation to all participants as their screening date falls due. We have started issuing reminders to people who have received an invitation but did not yet book a test. We estimate that reminder letters will be up-to-date by March 2021.

We are making considerable effort to increase uptake rates, as this will allow all test results and any follow-up procedures to be scheduled in a timely manner. A targeted advertising campaign to encourage uptake has been in place since July. We are working with stakeholders to promote the message that anyone who is due cervical screening this year can now book their test.

### **BowelScreen**

BowelScreen resumed issuing screening invitations on 04 August. All endoscopy units are scheduling colonoscopies and invitations to participate in screening are issued based on each unit's capacity.

The programme is working with its host hospitals to maximise available capacity for screened patients, and looking at ways to extend capacity in the longer-term. For example, this week we announced a new BowelScreen partnership with University Hospital Waterford.

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☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ [info@screeningservice.ie](mailto:info@screeningservice.ie) [www.screeningservice.ie](http://www.screeningservice.ie)



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BreastCheck  
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coik  
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck  
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERIBHEACS  
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen  
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Putóige  
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic  
RetinaScreen  
An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Scrim de Driabairigh  
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme



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Over 48,000 new invitations have been issued and 462 new FIT positive patients have been referred for colonoscopy since the programme resumed issuing new invitations (up to 31 October).

### Safety measures

The National Screening Service urges people to attend for screening, when they are due. Precautions are in place to protect both patients and staff, such as social distancing and the wearing of PPE. Participants can travel for screening appointments in another county under current COVID-19 restrictions. We will continue to follow public health guidelines to ensure participant safety and are encouraging people to attend for screening when invited.

### Screening

Screening is a population health measure for people who are presumed healthy and do not have symptoms. The NSS continues to encourage all people who are between screening appointments, or waiting for rescheduled appointments, to be aware of symptoms. We ask that those people contact their GP, who will arrange appropriate follow-up care.

For other queries patients can call the Freephone information line on 1800 45 45 55, email [info@screeningservice.ie](mailto:info@screeningservice.ie) or contact your clinic directly.

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

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Fiona Murphy  
Chief Executive  
National Screening Service

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National Screening Service



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coik  
The National Breast Screening Programme



AN CLÁR NAISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CEIRBEACS  
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Putóige  
The National Bowel Screening Programme



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Netim de Diabeteigh  
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme