



01 July 2020

Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice
michael.fitzmaurice@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: HM/Communications

PQ11714/20: To ask the Minister for Health when CervicalCheck and BreastCheck will resume; the way in which the health service plans to catch up on missed screening; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Fitzmaurice,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

The National Screening Service (NSS) is planning a phased restart of its screening programmes in July 2020. CervicalCheck will begin sending invites and reminders to participants in its cervical screening programme on July 06. It is projected that BreastCheck will resume screening in September/October.

Invitations and reminders for people who are now overdue screening will be sent on a phased basis, in line with programme prioritisation. In the case of cervical screening, this means that invitations and reminders will be first sent to people who are overdue a non-routine repeat screening.

The BreastCheck static units are continuing to assist the symptomatic service delivery for their host hospitals, and prioritising patients with a known high grade/aggressive cancer. BreastCheck mobile units are being reconditioned to meet infection control and physical distancing standards ahead of breast screening restarting.

Screening will look different when we restart. In order to ensure a safe restart we will be taking measures to protect both participants and staff, and monitoring the restart to ensure their continuing safety. For this reason, we will be unable to screen people at the same level as pre-COVID-19. We will continue to follow Public Health guidelines and will adapt our planning accordingly. The health and safety of our participants continues to be our top priority at this time. We will also be ensuring all parts of the system have sufficient capacity to process the volume of tests during the restart period, as blockages could result in delayed test results for participants.

The recommencement of screening is underpinned by the assumption that there will be no worsening of the COVID-19 situation & restrictions will continue to ease. Provided all key conditions remain safe for participants and staff, on a monthly basis invitations will be sent to individuals overdue a routine screening.

Screening is a population health measure for people who are presumed healthy and do not have symptoms. The aim of a population screening programme is to reduce the incidence of disease in a population. Screening is not a diagnostic tool and no screening test is completely accurate. All screening programmes are limited by the sensitivity of the test which is the ability to detect those with the disease in a population (true positives). Screening programmes are likewise limited by the specificity of the test which is the ability to detect those who are free of the disease (true negatives). Therefore, a negative test result is not a guarantee that you are clear of the condition or that you won't develop the condition between screening appointments.

Teach Óstaí an Rí, 200 Sráid Parnell, Baile Átha Cliath D01 A3Y8. King's Inn House, 200 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, D01 A3Y8.
☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ info@screeningservice.ie www.screeningservice.ie





An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála National Screening Service

The NSS continues to encourage all people who are between screening appointments, or waiting for rescheduled appointments, to be aware of, and act upon, any symptoms associated with the conditions for which they are being screened. 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 or contact their clinic directly.

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

Celine Fitzgerald
Interim CEO
National Screening Service

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



BreastCheck
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála Uacht
The National Breast Screening Programme



CervicalCheck
AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERVICIAIC
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



BowelScreen
AN tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púlaige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



Diabetic RetinaScreen
AN tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála Diaibéiteach
The National Diabetic Retina Screening Programme