



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

02 July 2020

Deputy Matt Carthy
matt.carthy@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ12422/20: To ask the Minister for Health when cancer screening programmes will recommence; the waiting list for each programme; the estimated time frame for clearing each waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Carthy,

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 06 July 2020. It is projected that BreastCheck and BowelScreen 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.

Screening was paused in March 2020 on Public Health and Department of Health advice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 01 July, BowelScreen therefore has an additional 65,547 screening invites to issue; BreastCheck has an additional 79,000 invites to issue; CervicalCheck has an additional 100,000 invites to issue. Please note that this is the number of outstanding invites due to the pause in screening, not the final number of people who will come forward for screening.

It is difficult at present to provide an accurate estimate of the time that will be needed to address the outstanding invites. We continue to assess capacity at our screening and laboratory facilities to understand the impact of new processes and procedures and how they will impact on the throughput of our programme participants.

In order to ensure a safe restart we will take measures to protect both participants and staff, and monitor to ensure their continuing safety. For this reason, we will be unable to screen people at the same numbers as we did 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.

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

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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.

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, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Celine Fitzgerald
Interim CEO,
National Screening Service

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An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Uthch
The National Breast Screening Programme



AN CLÁR NÁISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CEIRBEACAS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Púilíge
The National Bowel Screening Programme



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Retiní do Diaibéitigh
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme