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Cervical Screening Programme ID: [csp_id]
PPS No: [PPSN]

Dear [Surname]

CervicalCheck invites you to make an appointment for a free cervical screening (smear) test. You can make this appointment with your choice of GP (doctor) or nurse registered with CervicalCheck. You can find a list of registered doctors or nurses on hse.ie/cervicalcheck

Having regular cervical screening is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of cervical cancer. It may find early changes in the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb) before they develop into cancer. Finding these changes early makes them easier to treat.

However, like all screening programmes, cervical screening is not always accurate and some women will still develop cervical cancer. This is why it is so important that you attend for cervical screening each time you are due and always pay attention to possible symptoms. You should go to your doctor if you have any symptoms. You can read about symptoms on the back of this letter.

On the day of your screening appointment, the doctor or nurse will ask you to give your consent to take part in our programme. Please read the information on the back of this letter. Before you sign your consent, make sure that you understand:

- the benefits of screening
- the limitations of screening
- what giving your consent to take part in the Cervical Screening Programme means

Please take this letter with you when going for your test as it has your Programme ID number (CSPID). It is important that you let us know if your details change.

You can also read more about screening in the leaflet we sent you with this letter and on hse.ie/cervicalcheck

If you prefer to talk to us, please call Freephone **1800 45 45 55** or talk to the doctor or nurse who will take your test. You can also contact CervicalCheck by emailing info@cervicalcheck.ie

Yours sincerely,



Peter McKenna, Interim Clinical Director, CervicalCheck



Benefits of screening

Regular cervical screening:

- saves lives
- can detect abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix when they are easier to treat
- helps detect abnormal changes before symptoms develop

It is estimated that cervical screening can prevent 75% of cervical cancer. Detecting abnormal cells early is the best way to prevent cervical cancer. This is why having regular screening tests is important.

Since CervicalCheck started in 2008:

- more than 3 million screening tests have been carried out
- the number of women who develop cervical cancer has fallen
- over 100,000 cases of abnormal cervical cells have been detected, many of which could have developed into cancer if not detected through screening and treated where necessary

What are the limitations to screening?

The main limitations of screening are:

- Cervical screening will not prevent all cases of cervical cancer
- Some women will still develop cervical cancer despite regular screening
- Some abnormal cell changes may be missed

If 1,000 women are screened, about 20 women will have abnormal cervical cells. About 15 women will have these cells detected through screening. Five women will not have these cells detected through screening and may develop cervical cancer.

Why are some abnormalities missed?

Abnormalities will sometimes be missed because:

- the sample was taken from an area of the cervix where there were no abnormal cells
- abnormal cells can look quite similar to normal ones and the differences can be very subtle, or
- the cells could not be seen clearly enough

Fortunately, cervical cancer takes many years to develop so abnormal cells missed on one screening test can be detected on the next one. This is why you should always attend your cervical screening test when it is due.

False positives and negatives

Sometimes test results are inaccurate. We call these 'false positives' and 'false negatives'. False positives and false negatives are unavoidable. They happen in every screening programme.

False positive results

A result may be reported as positive (abnormal cells), even

though there are no abnormal cells in the cervix. A 'false positive' may mean you will have further investigations that ultimately confirms that there was no risk of cancer at that time.

False negative results

A result may be reported as negative (normal cells), even though there are abnormal cells in the cervix. A 'false negative' may mean that you do not have further investigations when there may have been a risk of cancer at that time.

Therefore, even if your test result is normal, you may still be at risk of developing cervical cancer in the future. Because of this, it is important that you attend for cervical screening each time you are due and always pay attention to possible symptoms. You can read about symptoms in the leaflet we sent you and on [hse.ie/cervicalcheck](https://www.hse.ie/cervicalcheck)

Stay alert for symptoms

Outside of your regular screening tests, please be aware of symptoms that might be cervical cancer. Contact your doctor if you have any concerns.

Symptoms to look out for:

- a pain in your pelvis (anywhere between your bellybutton and the top of your thighs)
- irregular vaginal bleeding
- bleeding between periods
- vaginal spotting or discharge
- pain during sex
- bleeding after sex

Giving your consent

Each time you have a cervical screening test we will ask you to sign a consent form called a 'Cervical Screening Form' before the test. If you cannot sign the form, you will be asked to give your consent verbally or by making a mark on the form in front of a doctor or nurse.

This is to confirm that you:

- have been told about cervical screening and its benefits and limitations
- understand this information
- have checked that your name, address and other details are correct – this is to make sure we have your current address to communicate with you
- allow us to receive, hold and exchange your personal information and screening history with those who deliver the programme

People who deliver the programme include the doctor or nurse who takes your screening test, the laboratory, colposcopy clinics and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland.

Remember: Only you can give your consent to be part of our programme.

You have to consent before you have your screening test.