

Cervical Cancer Screening

Cervical cancer is not uncommon, there are at least 2000 new cases confirmed each year. The numbers have been in decline since routine screening tests have been in use and women are encouraged to have regular check ups.

Women between 25 and 65 are invited to have regular screening tests which are performed by your GP (or nurse) in order to prevent cervical cancer. During the test your GP will use an instrument called a speculum to visualize your cervix which is at the 'neck of the womb'. A small brush is used to collect cells from the cervix and placed into a preservative solution which is sent to the Laboratory. The cells are then examined under a microscope and their shape (or morphology) is checked.

Tests do not diagnose cancer but aim to help prevent it. The cells examined are most often completely normal, however, sometimes abnormal cells are found. Abnormal cells are not cancer they are a warning that cancer might develop from these cells in the future. Abnormal cells need to be treated. Further tests and appropriate treatment can be given to prevent cancer from developing in women with abnormal cells.

The Department of Health recommends that women between the ages of 20 and 64 have routine cervical smears every three to five years.

Recent developments have seen the introduction of a vaccination for Cervical Cancer. The vaccination aims to prevent common Human papillomavirus (HPV) strains. There are 2 vaccines in use at the moment Cervarix and Gardasil. Cervarix vaccinated against HPV strain 16 and 18 and is a course of 3 injections given to children over 10 years of age and adults at 0,1 and 6 months apart. Gardasil vaccinates against strains 6, 11, 16 and 18 and is for over 9yr olds at intervals of 0,2 and 6 months.

For more information about cervical cancer and how to be screened please contact your local Westover clinic.