

# SO, HOW IS YOUR CERVIX DOING?

If you can't answer, it's time for a smear test

In UK, women are advised to have smear test every 3 years between the age of 25-49 and every 5 years among ages 50-64. Midwives have significant public health role and into encouraging women to keep up to date with their cervical screening.

However, NHS Digital publication reports that out of 4.2 million women who were invited for their routine cervical screening in 2016, only over 3 million attended their screening appointment. A low percentage of cervical screening is specifically noted in women under 35yrs old.

Midwives have the opportunity to discuss women's cervical screening history, not only during the antenatal period but also postnatally. A significant percentage of women have reported that they have never had a smear test; therefore women have many questions to ask and discussing this with their midwives provides a good opportunity to be informed appropriately.

If a woman is pregnant and due for her routine cervical screening, it is advised that she has to schedule an appointment 12 weeks postnatally. However, if there was an abnormal result from a previous cervical screening test, or if the woman is not up to date with your screening (not had a test in the last three to five years, depending on your age), she may need to be screened while being pregnant. The GP or midwife may advise the woman to have a cervical screening test at the first antenatal appointment. This test will not interfere with the pregnancy. If there is any suspected abnormal result, a colposcopy may need to have performed (a closer examination of the cervix and vagina using a lighted magnifying instrument known as a colposcope). This simple examination is perfectly safe to have during pregnancy and allows the doctor to identify cervical changes.

As mentioned above, the postnatal period provides another opportunity for the midwife to raise awareness about the importance of the cervical screening by reminding the new mother when her last smear test was and encourage her to arrange a new appointment. Midwives need to document this when they send the discharge summary to the woman's GP, so that they would be aware for woman's need for cervical screening and follow up.

► For more information on the Cervical Screening Programme, visit: [cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical](https://cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical)

▶ Cervical screening policy varies across the UK and details can be found here: [screening.nhs.uk/cervicalcancer-compare](https://screening.nhs.uk/cervicalcancer-compare)

▶ Frequently asked questions can be found here: [screening.nhs.uk/cervicalcancer-qa](https://screening.nhs.uk/cervicalcancer-qa)