

# THE MEDICAL PRACTICE AT 48 WIMPOLE STREET

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## **PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET: CERVICAL SCREENING**

### What is cervical screening?

- It is not a test for diagnosing cervical cancer. It is a test to check the health of the cervix, which is the lower part of the womb (often called the neck of the womb).
- For many women the test shows that everything is fine.
- But for 1 in 10 women, the test shows changes in the cells that can be caused by many things.
- Most of these changes will not lead to cervical cancer.

### Why do I need cervical screening?

Cervical cancer can often be prevented. The signs that it may develop can be spotted early on so it can be stopped even before it gets started. Screening saves over 1000 lives in the UK each year, but unfortunately about 1500 women die from cervical cancer in the UK every year.

### Should all women have the test?

Cervical cancer is more common if you

- First had sex at an early age
- Smoke
- Do not use condoms
- Have had several sexual partners or have had a sexual partner who has had several other partners
- Take immunosuppressant drugs

You may not need the test if you are

- Over 65 and not taking HRT
- Have had a total hysterectomy
- Have never had sex

### About the test itself

The test takes only a few minutes. It is carried out by Dr Sophia Khalique or another female doctor at the practice. You will need to undress from the waist down and be asked to lie down on the couch. A plastic disposable speculum is inserted into your vagina to hold it open. A brush sampling device is then used to wipe cells from the cervix which are placed in a liquid medium before being sent to the laboratory. Debris is removed and the cells made into slides for analysis. It is possible to test for chlamydia and human papilloma virus (HPV) from the same sample.

You might experience some discomfort or pain – try to relax by taking slow deep breaths as it may hurt more if you are tense. If it is painful, tell the doctor straightaway as they may be able to reduce your discomfort.

*The results will be available within the week and given to you in writing.*

### When to have the test

Not whilst you are menstruating. Avoid the use of spermicides or lubricants 24 hours before the test as they contain chemicals that may affect the test results.

### How reliable is cervical screening?

Early detection and treatment can prevent 80 to 90% of cancers developing but, like other screening tests, it is not perfect.

We at the practice try to improve upon these figures by

- Using liquid based cytology (LBC/Thin prep). The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has confirmed this is a superior method than traditional slide tests at reducing the number of inadequate results.
- Recommending testing for high risk subtype HPV. This has been identified as the major risk factor in developing cervical cancer; found in over 95% of cervical cancer.

### References

1. Cervical screening results EXPLAINED a guide for primary care, NHS Cancer Screening Programmes ([www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical/publications](http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk/cervical/publications)):
2. Cervical screening: THE FACTS
3. What your abnormal result means
4. The colposcopy examination
5. HPV Factsheet
6. NICE Guidelines liquid based cytology for cervical screening (review) (no 69)  
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