



衛生署

Department of Health

## Cervical Screening Programme



### What causes cervical cancer?

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by persistent infection with one of the cancer-causing or high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) types. HPV infection is common in any person who has ever been sexually active. Most people with HPV infection do not have any symptom and will clear on their own. Some females with persistent high-risk HPV infection in the cervix will develop pre-cancerous cell changes. While the majority of these changes will regress to normal, some may progress to cancer over years. Risk factors for the progression from HPV infection to cervical cancer include:

- having multiple sexual partners, sexual intercourse at earlier age, or presence of sexually-transmitted diseases
- smoking
- weakened immunity such as infection with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- long term use of oral contraceptive pills for more than 5 years
- increasing parity (number of babies born) and younger age at first pregnancy

The most important risk factor is failure to get a regular cervical cancer screen.

### How can I prevent cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer screening can detect pre-cancerous cells in the cervix before cancer develops. When abnormal cells are found, they can be treated. Having regular cervical cancer screening is the most effective way to prevent cervical cancer.

You can also lower the risk of getting cervical cancer by the following primary preventive measures:

- Practice safer sex (such as avoid having multiple sexual partners and use condoms) to reduce the chance of getting HPV infection and sexually transmitted diseases
- Do not smoke
- Get HPV vaccination before initiation of sexual activity

### What is cervical smear?

Cervical smear (also named the Pap smear) is a quick and simple screening test to detect abnormal cell changes in the cervix. It only takes few minutes. The doctor or nurse will put a special instrument called a speculum into the vagina and then wipe some cells from the cervix gently with a spatula or a brush. The cells will be sent to the laboratory for examination.

### Who needs cervical cancer screening?

- Women aged 25-64 years who ever had sex, irrespective of whether being single or married, should have regular cervical cancer screening.
- Women aged 65 years or above who ever had sex and have never had cervical cancer screening should talk to the doctor about having a cervical smear, even if they no longer have periods, haven't had sexual experience for many years or had sterilisation.
- Women aged below 25 years who ever had sex and risk factors for cervical cancer (such as multiple sexual partners, smoking, weakened immunity), should seek advice from doctors concerning the need for cervical cancer screening.
- Women who have received HPV vaccination still need regular cervical cancer screening because HPV vaccination does not protect against the HPV types not included in the vaccine, nor against existing HPV infections.

- Women who have never had sex do not need cervical cancer screening.
- Women who have hysterectomy with removal of cervix for benign diseases and without prior history of cervical changes can discontinue screening.

If in doubt, please consult the doctor.

### **When should I have cervical cancer screening?**

- All women who ever had sex should have cervical cancer screening starting from the age of 25.
- If your first cervical smear result is normal, you should have the second smear 1 year later.
- If your second smear result is also normal, you should have repeat smears every 3 years.
- If you have any symptoms (such as abnormal vaginal bleeding), you should see a doctor promptly, even if your last smear result was normal.

### **Where can I have cervical cancer screening?**

You may visit your family doctor, gynaecologists, non-governmental organisations, Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHC) and Women Health Centres of the Department of Health for cervical cancer screening. If you wish to take cervical smear at the MCHC, please call the 24-hour hotline of Cervical Screening Phone Booking Service: 3166 6631. The booking guideline can be downloaded from:

[www.fhs.gov.hk/english/main\\_ser/woman\\_health/phone\\_booking.html](http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/main_ser/woman_health/phone_booking.html).

### **Cervical Screening Programme**

The Cervical Screening Programme (CSP) is a territory-wide screening programme launched by the Department of Health in collaboration with other healthcare professionals to encourage women to have regular cervical cancer screening.

CSP has established a computerised central registry “Cervical Screening Information System” (CSIS) for storing all the data related to CSP, including participants’ information, smear results and date of next smear recommended by healthcare professionals. Once you have registered with the CSP, you can login to the CSIS to view your cervical smear records and will receive reminder letter before the next smear is due. Healthcare professionals who have registered with the CSP can view your past smear records upon your authorisation so as to provide better continual health care.

As individual healthcare professionals providing cervical cancer screening service have different appointment procedures and service charges, you have to contact your healthcare professional directly for enquiry and arranging service appointment.

Recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) are waived from payment of their public health care expenses upon presenting the valid Certificate of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients (for Medical Waivers). Non-CSSA recipients who have financial difficulties in paying medical expenses may consider applying for medical fee waiving in public hospitals and clinics. For details, please contact the Integrated Family Service Centres or Family and Child Protective Services Units of the Social Welfare Department or Medical Social Services Units of public hospitals and clinics.

For more information about Cervical Screening Programme, please visit our website at:

[www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk](http://www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk).

**Regular Screening Prevents Cervical Cancer**