

# Having a smear test

## What is it about?

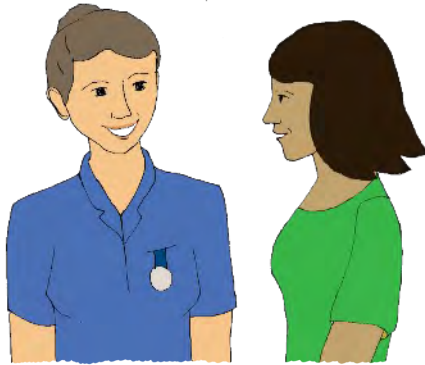


Jo's cervical  
cancer trust



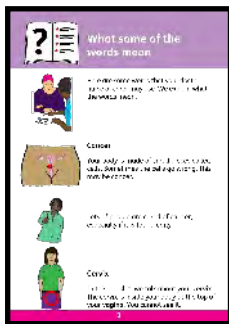


# About this booklet



This is an EasyRead booklet for women thinking about having a **smear test**.

A smear test could stop you getting cervical cancer.



This booklet includes:

**What some of the words mean** Page 3



**Do you need a smear test?** Page 8



**Why is having a smear test important?** Page 9



**Your rights** Page 10



## Tips to make a smear test as easy as it can be

Page 11



## What happens during a smear test?

Page 13



This booklet has been written by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust.

We are a charity for people with or who are worried about cervical cancer.

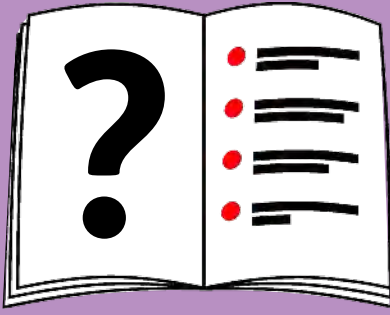


If you have questions, call us on

**0808 802 8000.**



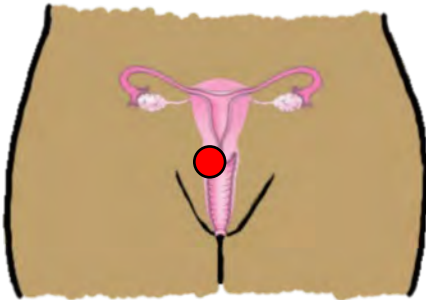
We will listen to your worries and give you information you can trust.



# What some of the words mean



Here are some words that your doctor, nurse or carer may use. We will explain what the words mean.



## Cancer

Your body is made of small parts called cells. Sometimes the cells go wrong. This may be cancer.



Lots of people are cured of cancer, especially if it is found early.



## Cervix

In this booklet, we talk about your **cervix**. The cervix is inside your body at the top of your **vagina**. You cannot see it.



## Vagina

People use different words for their **vagina** like:

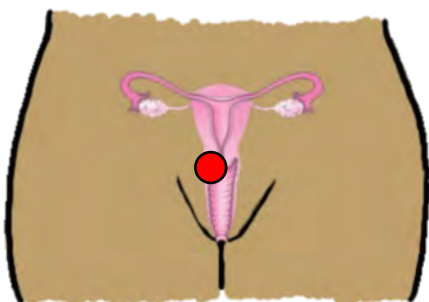
- front bottom
- down below
- private parts
- fanny
- flower
- foof.

In this booklet, we say **vagina**.



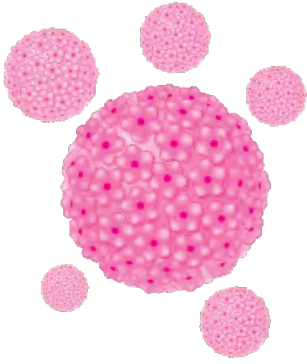
## Underwear

Knickers or pants. In this booklet, we say **knickers**.



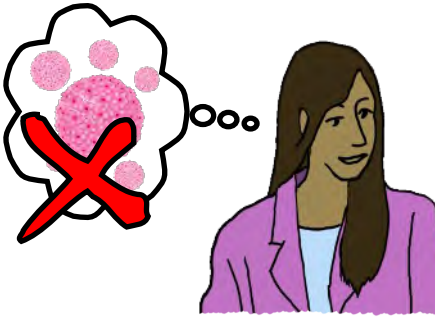
## Cervical cancer

A **cancer** in your **cervix**.

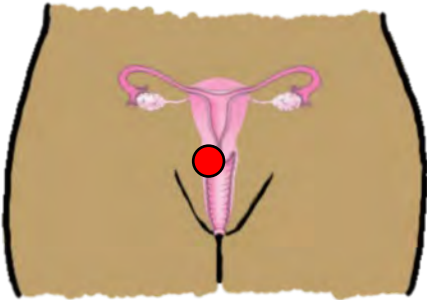


## HPV

**HPV** is a virus, like a cold. You get HPV from other people.



Most people get HPV. Usually, HPV is not a problem. You might not know you have it. There are lots of different types of HPV. Some types can make the cells in your cervix go wrong.



For a very small number of women, HPV can cause **cervical cancer**.

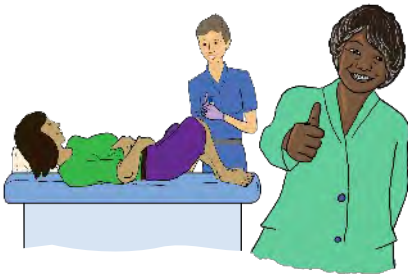


When you have sex, you may get HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

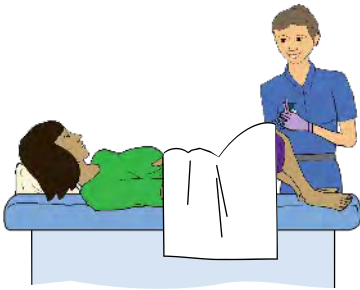


## HPV vaccination

This is a jab, like a flu jab. It is given to teenage girls to help stop them getting some types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer.

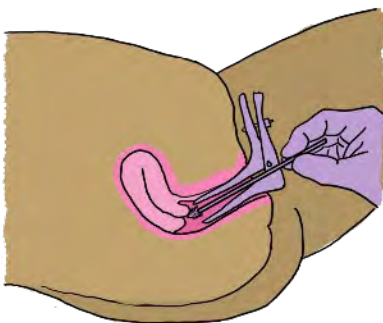


If you have had the jab, you need to go for smear tests.



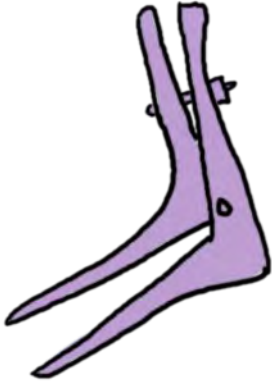
## Smear test

A smear test is sometimes called cervical screening. Here we will always call it a **smear test**.



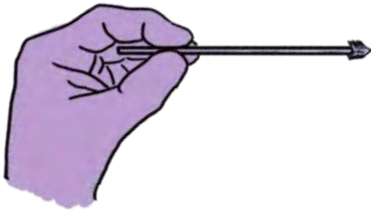
A **smear test** looks for changes to the cells of your **cervix**. It is **not** a test for cancer. Finding changes before they turn into cancer can help stop cervical cancer.

If the cells show changes, you may have a test for HPV.



## Speculum

When you have a **smear test**, your nurse needs to see your **cervix**. They use a **speculum** made of plastic to gently open your **vagina**.



## Brush

When you have a **smear test**, your doctor or nurse uses a small **brush** to take cells from your **cervix**.





# Do you need a smear test?



**25 to 64  
years old**

Women are asked to go for smear tests from age 25 to age 64.



Any woman who has had sex with a man or a woman should think about having a smear test.

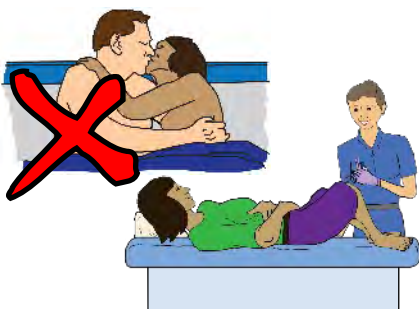


This means:

- anyone who has had any kind of sex



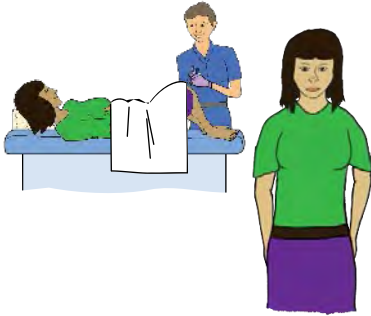
- any kind of sexual touching.



If you have not had sex, you can still choose to have a smear test. It is your choice.



# Why is having a smear test important?



Very few women with learning disabilities have a smear test.



Some carers, doctors and nurses think women with learning disabilities do not need one.



Sometimes parents and carers do not know if you are having sex.

Some parents and carers are too embarrassed to talk about it. They may not help women with learning disabilities to get a test.



Having a smear test saves 5,000 women's lives every year. It could save your life.



# Your rights



**25 to 64  
years old**

You can have a smear test between the ages of 25 and 64.

If you are age 25 to 49, you can have a smear test every 3 years. If you are age 50 or older, you can have a smear test every 5 years.



Your doctor should send a letter asking you to book a smear test. If they do not send a letter, ask them for a smear test.



You can stop the smear test at any time. You may want to stop it if it hurts, is too uncomfortable or you change your mind.



No one can make you have a smear test. You have the right to say no.



# Tips to make a smear test as easy as it can be



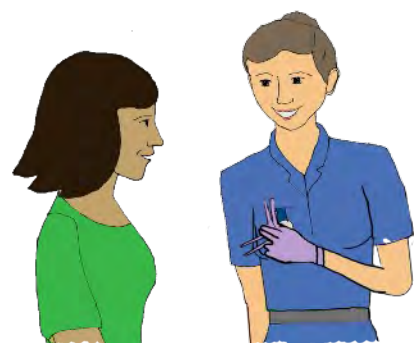
1. Find out as much as you can about what happens during a smear test.



2. Read this Easy Read booklet with someone who has had a smear test. They can help explain it to you.



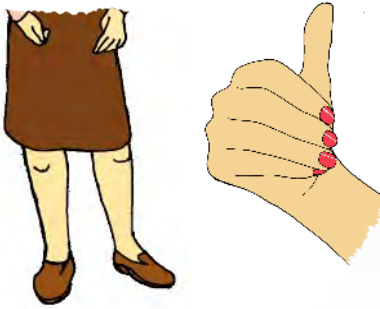
3. Talk about what happens at a smear test with friends, family, your learning disability nurse or other people you trust.



4. If you want to see where the smear test is done, ask your doctor. They can also show you what instruments they use to do the test.



5. Take a friend. Having someone you trust with you can help. Lots of women do this, so do not be scared to ask.



6. Wearing a skirt or dress may make the smear test easier.



7. Take your mind off the smear test by doing some breathing exercises, listening to music, or anything else that helps.



8. If the smear test hurts, say straight away.



9. If you have any questions, ask your nurse or doctor. Or call us on **0808 802 8000**. This phone number is free from a landline, but costs from a mobile phone.



# What happens during a smear test?



You get a letter asking you to go to your doctors for a smear test.



You need call your doctors to book a time and day to go.



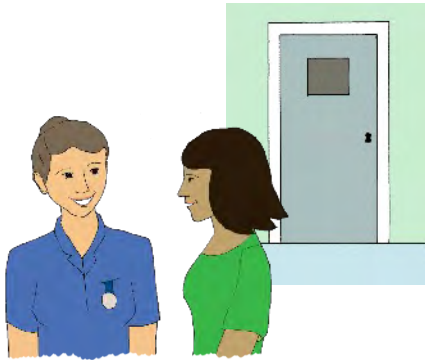
Book a time and day when you are not having your period.



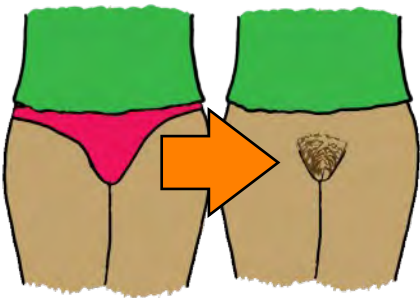
A nurse usually does the smear test. If you want to make sure a female nurse does it, tell them.



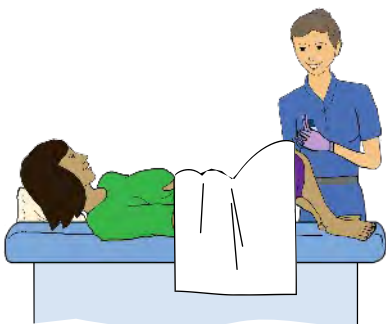
If you want a friend to stay with you, tell them.



You will go into a private room. The nurse will ask about your health.



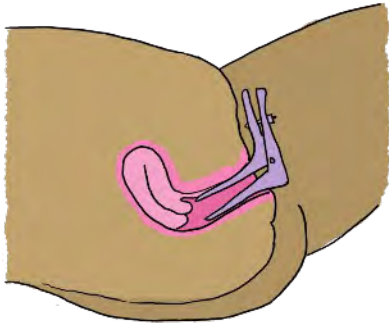
Then they will then ask you to take your knickers off.



Then they will ask you to lie down on a bed. You will have a paper sheet over you.



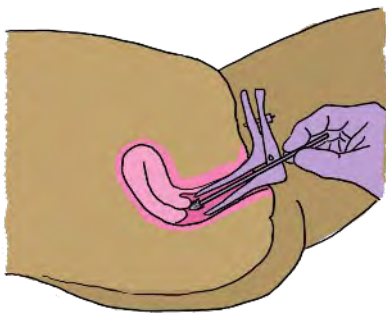
This is the time to try to relax.



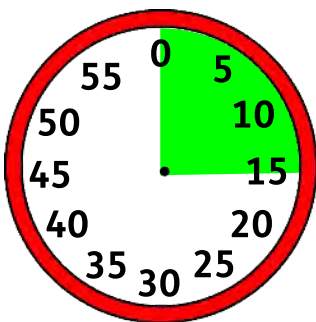
The nurse will ask you to open your legs. This is so they can put the speculum inside your vagina.



The speculum may feel uncomfortable. If it hurts, tell the nurse to stop.



The brush is put inside the speculum. It takes a sample of cells from your cervix. This should not hurt.



The speculum is taken out and the test is over. The whole visit to the doctor takes 15 minutes at the most.



The sample of cells is tested.





You will get a letter with your results in a few weeks.



## Smear test results

9 out of 10 women will have a normal smear test result. This means nothing is wrong. You will be asked to go for another smear test in 3 or 5 years depending on how old you are.



1 out of 10 women might need to go back to the doctor for more tests. This is because they may have cells that have gone wrong (abnormal cells). They may also have an HPV infection.



If you need to go back to the doctor, your results letter will tell you what to do.



You can talk about your results with your carer, friends, or learning disability nurse. Or you can call us on **0808 802 8000**.

# The Smear Test Film



If you would like to know more about smear tests, you can also watch our film called **The Smear Test Film**.

You can watch the film on our website at [www.jostrust.org.uk/smeartestfilm](http://www.jostrust.org.uk/smeartestfilm)

## Notes and appointments

# How we made this booklet



We asked women with learning disabilities to help us make this booklet. We talked about their views on smear tests, what the booklet should include and how the booklet should look.



We also asked health experts who know about smear tests to make sure the booklet is correct.

We hope it helps you learn more about smear tests, your rights and cervical cancer.



This paper has been designed and produced for Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust by the EasyRead service at Inspired Services Publishing Ltd. Ref ISL116 18. May 2018.



[www.inspiredservices.org.uk](http://www.inspiredservices.org.uk)

It meets the European EasyRead Standard.



[Inspired•pics](http://www.inspired.pics)

Artwork includes material from the Inspired EasyRead Collection and cannot be used anywhere else without written permission from Inspired Services. [www.inspired.pics](http://www.inspired.pics)

Jo's cervical  
cancer trust



Call our helpline:

**0808 802 8000**

This information was correct at time of publication. For references, email [publications@jostrust.org.uk](mailto:publications@jostrust.org.uk)

**EasyRead booklet:  
Having a smear test  
What is it about?**

Version 2.0

Date last updated: June 2018

Date for review: June 2020



Health & care  
information  
you can trust

The Information Standard



Certified  
Member

Contact us:

[jostrust.org.uk](http://jostrust.org.uk)

[info@jostrust.org.uk](mailto:info@jostrust.org.uk)