

HPV self-testing communications toolkit

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About HPV self-testing

The UKNSC has recommended the NHS implements Human papillomavirus (HPV) self-testing as part of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. It does not replace the primary cervical screening test.

Invitation to take part in HPV self-testing is initially limited to an eligible group of women and anyone with a cervix aged 30 to 65, who have not attended cervical screening following previous invitations. The service will be gradually rolled out through an initial testing period, after which non-responders to cervical screening will be invited, over the course of up to one year. The service will then move to 'business as usual', as people who have not attended cervical screening following previous invitations become eligible for self-testing.

People who test positive for high-risk HPV, following a self-test, will still need to attend for a clinician taken sample.

HPV self-testing will support participation of women and people with a cervix who have not regularly attended for screening. This will reduce inequalities, improve participant experience and support the elimination of cervical cancer by 2040, in line with WHO targets.

Proactive national comms

- National press release
- Video /social media content which can be re-shared locally
- Bulletin content
- Stakeholder engagement

Purpose of this toolkit and recommended communications approach to be taken locally

The following information provides a clear narrative of the HPV self-testing offer and answers to common questions. This initial offer is limited to an eligible group of

women and people with a cervix who have not attended cervical screening following previous invitations. It is important to manage the messaging so as not to create non-responders among those currently attending NHS cervical screening.

Local activity might include using the narrative to create videos for specific targeted communities, or to help clinicians on the ground describe the offer.

Narrative

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer. However, for those women and people with a cervix, who have not attended cervical screening following previous invitations, the NHS is offering HPV self-testing as an alternative check for a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV).

HPV is a common virus and is usually harmless, but some high-risk types can increase your chance of developing cervical cancer.

If you are eligible, the NHS will invite you to take part in HPV self-testing. Your invite could come through the NHS App, in a text message (SMS), an email or a letter. Once you've been invited, it's easy to order your free kit in the NHS App or through your NHS online account or via the order telephone line.

HPV self-testing is different from cervical screening. You can do it yourself, in private. The test involves inserting a swab (a bit like a cotton bud) a few centimetres into your vagina to collect a sample. You then post the sample back to the NHS for free, where it is checked for high-risk HPV.

If high-risk HPV is found, it does not mean you have cervical cancer. You'll be asked to book a cervical screening appointment at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic where a nurse or doctor will take a small sample from your cervix. This will be checked for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer. These changes can be treated.

We don't yet have the evidence to show that switching to HPV self-testing is as effective at preventing cervical cancer as regularly attending cervical screening, when invited. But if you haven't been screened, self-testing is the next best option.

You can still **book a cervical screening appointment any time** – even if you were invited for cervical screening months or years ago.

Q&A (to be used for reactive media queries and to support GP practices to field questions from patients)

1. When will HPV self-testing kits be available?

NHS England began rolling out HPV self-testing on Tuesday 25 August 2026.

2. Who can order the HPV self-testing kits?

If you are eligible, you will be invited by the NHS to order an HPV self-test kit. Invitations are initially limited to an eligible group of women and people with a cervix aged 30 to 65, who have not attended cervical screening following previous invitations. This is in line with the UKNSC recommendation.

3. How many people will be invited to take part in HPV self-testing?

HPV self-testing will be rolled out in phases. The initial phase will be limited to an eligible group of women and people with a cervix who at the time of roll-out have not attended cervical screening following previous invitations. We expect to send out around 4 million invitations in this phase.

4. What is the criteria for eligibility?

This initial offer is limited to an eligible group, identified at the time of roll-out, of women and people with a cervix who have not attended cervical screening following previous routine invitations.

5. Why is it restricted to this group only?

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

We don't yet have the evidence to show that switching to HPV self-testing is as effective at preventing cervical cancer as regularly attending cervical screening. But if you haven't been screened, self-testing is the next best option.

As part of this initial phase, we are evaluating how best to deliver this offer, inviting an eligible cohort of around 4 million women and people with a cervix who have not attended cervical screening following previous routine invitations.

6. How can I order a kit?

The NHS will invite you to take part in HPV self-testing. Your invite could come through the NHS App, in a text message (SMS), an email or a letter.

Once you've got your invite, follow the instructions to order your free kit in the [NHS App or through your NHS online account](#). If you don't have an account, you can create one or use the telephone order line. Your invitation also includes information about other ways to order a kit.

7. Is HPV self-testing as good as a clinician taken cervical screening?

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

We don't yet have the evidence to show that switching to HPV self-testing is as effective at preventing cervical cancer as regularly attending cervical screening. But if you haven't been screened, self-testing is the next best option.

Further studies to consider whether self-testing could be rolled out for all women and people with a cervix, are planned.

8. How does the HPV self-testing kit work?

A sample of cells will be self-collected from the vagina, using a swab, a bit like a cotton bud. This is a different method to a cervical screening where a clinician takes a sample from the cervix. The self-testing method checks for the presence of high-risk HPV only. People who test positive for high-risk HPV will still need to go for a clinician taken sample to get cytology (an examination of the cells of their cervix). Full details about how to take an HPV self-test will be included in the kit that you receive and a video is available.

9. What's the difference between cervical screening and HPV self-testing?

Cervical screening

- Takes place at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic.
- A nurse or doctor takes a small sample from your cervix.
- The sample is checked for high-risk HPV.
- If high-risk HPV is found, the sample is then checked for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer.
- These changes can be treated.

HPV self-testing

- You take your own sample at home or in a private space.
- The test involves inserting a swab (a bit like a cotton bud) a few centimetres into your vagina to collect a sample. There are full instructions in the kit.
- You then post the sample back to the NHS for free, where it is checked for high-risk HPV.

- If high-risk HPV is found, you'll be asked to book a cervical screening appointment at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic.
- A nurse or doctor will take a small sample from your cervix that can be checked for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer.
- These changes can be treated.

10. If high-risk HPV is found in my sample, why do I need to go for a cervical screening with my clinician?

HPV self-testing only looks for the presence of high-risk HPV. It does not look for any cell changes that might lead to cancer, if left untreated.

If high-risk HPV is found, it does not mean you have cervical cancer. You'll be asked to book a cervical screening appointment at your GP surgery or sexual health clinic where a nurse or doctor will take a small sample from your cervix. This will be checked for cell changes that could increase the risk of cervical cancer. These changes can be treated.

11. How will HPV self-testing be offered?

Anyone who is eligible will initially be contacted via the NHS App. They will be able to request an HPV self-testing kit and receive it through the post. If the person does not have the NHS App, the invitation will be sent using another form of communication, to ensure no one is excluded. We encourage people to download the [NHS App](#) and ensure notifications are switched on.

12. I need additional help with my HPV self-test. What should I do?

The instructions in the kit will tell you how to do the test. If you need any extra help – for example, if you have a physical or learning disability – support is available. You'll find contact details in your kit instructions.

13. I've received an invitation for HPV self-testing but am no longer getting invitations to cervical screening. Why is this?

If your routine cervical screening is due on or after your 60th birthday and you do not attend, you will receive confirmation that you will no longer receive routine invitations. You may still receive an invitation to request an HPV self-testing kit if you are aged 30 to 65.

14. What if I don't want to do the self-testing?

You can still **book a cervical screening appointment any time** – even if you were invited for cervical screening months or years ago.

If your routine cervical screening is due on or after your 60th birthday and you do not attend, you will receive confirmation that you will no longer receive routine invitations. You may receive an invitation to request an HPV self-testing kit.

Find out more at nhs.uk/cervicalscreening/

15. I've had the HPV vaccine. Do I still need to take the HPV self-test if invited?

The vaccine doesn't protect against all HPV types. Even if you've had the HPV vaccine, you should still go for cervical screening appointments or, if invited, take an HPV self-test.

If you are under 25 and missed your HPV vaccine when you were 12 or 13, contact your GP surgery to get vaccinated.

16. How effective/reliable is the kit in identifying high-risk HPV?

Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

We don't yet have the evidence to show that switching to HPV self-testing is as effective at preventing cervical cancer as regularly attending cervical screening. But if you haven't been screened, self-testing is the next best option.

Further studies to consider whether self-testing could be rolled out for all women and people with a cervix, are planned.

17. Can I opt in to have a self-test kit?

No, you will be invited to take part if you are eligible.

18. Can someone else order an HPV self-test kit for me?

HPV self-testing kits can only be ordered by the person who has been invited. If you have been invited, you can order your kit through the NHS App or by calling the helpline number provided in your invitation.

19. If I receive a high-risk HPV positive result from an HPV self-test, can I go for a cervical screen at a sexual health clinic?

Yes. The HPV self-test shows if you have got high-risk HPV. A high-risk HPV positive result does not mean you have cancer. A cervical screen taken by a clinician will help to see if the HPV is causing any abnormal cell changes which, if left untreated, could lead to cancer.

20. I can't do the HPV test myself. Can I go to my GP to help me do it?

The instructions in the kit will tell you how to do the test. If you need any extra help – for example, if you have a physical or learning disability – support is available. You'll find contact details in your self-test kit instructions.

Social Media Content

Image 1



Alt Text: Woman holding a phone while sitting on a chair. The text on the image says: "Missed your cervical screening? The NHS may invite you to take an HPV self-test instead."

Image 2



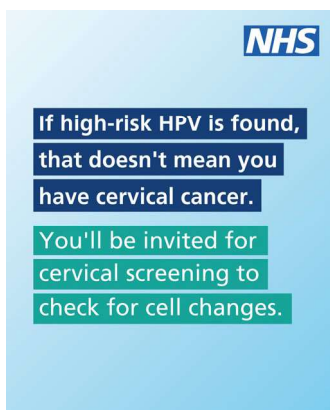
Alt Text: HPV self-test kit with a tube and swab, Safe T Pouch and return envelope. The text on the image says: "If invited, order your kit and take your sample yourself. At home or in private. No appointment needed"

Image 3



Alt Text: A person posting an HPV self-test sample into a post box. The text on the image says: "What happens next? Put your sample into the bag that's in your kit and into the envelope. Send your sample back free by post."

Image 4



Alt Text: The text on the image says: “If HPV is found, that doesn't mean you have cervical cancer. You'll be invited for cervical screening to check for cell changes.”

Image 5



Alt Text: A person holding a phone, with an NHS App notification on screen. The text on the image says: “HPV self-testing invitations will be sent through the NHS App first. Download the NHS App and turn on notifications.”