

LANCASHIRE & SOUTH CUMBRIA PRIMARY CARE TRAINING HUB

Clinical Education Session Handbook

Cervical Sampling



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Introduction

Cervical screening looks for the human papillomavirus (HPV) which can cause abnormal cells on the cervix. If HPV is found a cytology test is used as a triage, to check for any abnormal cells.

If no abnormal cells are found, a follow up screen is arranged for 12 months' time. This will check to see if the immune system has cleared the virus.

If HPV is not found, the individual will be offered a screening test again in 3 to 5 years (depending on age).

Most HPV infections are transient, and slightly abnormal cells often go away on their own when the virus clears. If HPV persists, abnormal cells can, if left untreated, turn into cancer over time.

If abnormal cells are found, the individual will be referred to colposcopy.



Equipment Required

Equipment for cervical sample taking should include:

- an adjustable height examination couch
- a good light source
- specula of different sizes and waterbased lubricating gel
- disposable non-latex gloves, apron (appropriate PPE)
- information leaflets for women
- a supply of Cervex-Brush®
- a supply of endocervical brushes
- a supply of fixative vials – ThinPrep
- packaging for transporting LBC samples to the laboratory
- A trolley for laying your equipment on to.
- Clinical and general waste bin.
- Clinell Wipes (or alternative for wiping down surfaces)
- For the purpose of clinical education sessions – the Mannequin.



Things to Consider

How do I prepare for taking a cervical sample?

Sample takers are responsible for:

- Not taking samples unless they are competent to do so
- Identifying any personal training needs
- Completing all training required, and attending regular updates
- Keeping up to date with changes in the programme and current best practice
- Monitoring their own practice by undertaking sample taker audit
- Being accountable for all use of their allocated sample taker code
- Ensuring that the woman is provided with the necessary information and advice to assist her in making an informed choice about whether to participate or not
- Taking the cervical sample in the appropriate manner when due as part of the screening programme
- Ensuring the woman is informed of her test result
- Ensuring that the test result is followed up appropriately
- Ensuring referrals take place for woman who require further investigation and treatment

Think about your environment....

Review the consulting room where screening takes place. Consider the layout and location of rooms to ensure there is a confidential quiet, private area that is welcoming.

Make sure all your equipment is ready at hand before you start and make sure you will not be disturbed.

Toilet and handwashing facilities should be situated close by.

There needs to be a place for the woman to lay her clothes aside and also to be able to dispose of any sanitary/ continence products

Adhere to Infection control Policy

How can I make sure the woman is ready?

- Welcome the woman when she arrives and introduce yourself.
- The woman should be put at ease from the start, welcoming her is an important part of this.
- You should check her name, date of birth and address to make sure they are correct. This will be important for ensuring she receives her result.
- It is important that the woman fully understands what you are going to do in the procedure and what to expect; including taking the sample, receiving her results and what will happen if the result is abnormal.
- Although the woman receives the NHS Cervical Screening leaflet, she may have some other questions.

Before proceeding you should be confident that the woman is fully informed and is therefore able to consent to the process.

Women with specific needs or disabilities

It is important to consider specific needs in relation to cervical screening in order to maximise opportunities for women to attend. Primary care is well placed to know their practice population needs, and to identify reasons why women are not attending.

These reasons may include:

- access problems
- lack of time, or inability to attend during usual clinic hours
- disability (physical or mental)
- language barriers
- cultural beliefs

Women with disabilities have the same right of access to cervical screening as other women. All women are entitled to information to make their decision about cervical screening and are entitled to reasonable adjustments to support them attending an appointment. We should consider the clinic facilities for women with a physical disability, including:

- access to the venue (can an alternative be offered?)
- the height of the couch
- the woman's physical limitations

- the possibility of a domiciliary visit
- the need for assistance and seeking specialist advice if necessary

In the case of paraplegic women, the sample taker may need to make special arrangements, for example with the local colposcopy service, to take a sample at a clinic where a hoist is available.

Language and cultural differences can affect understanding or the screening process. It is important to take measures to ensure all women understand the purpose of the screening programme and the procedure for taking the sample. Language translations of the screening invitation leaflet are available to download, and alternative formats can be made available on request (such as braille). Primary care is responsible for sourcing and offering language support during sample taking if needed.

Make it a positive experience!

Fear and embarrassment are some of the main influencing factors for women who choose not to have screening. Previous experience is important when women are deciding whether to make an appointment.

Ensure women are put at ease and all their questions are answered during their appointment. They may tell their family and friends if their experience was positive or negative.

You need

- Screens / Curtain for privacy
- Paper roll to cover the couch and provide a modesty cover sheet for the woman (make sure she has enough!)
- Room with a lockable door – tell the woman you are locking the door too! It will help put her at ease!
- Closed windows & closed blinds.
- Heating – the room needs to be warm!
- Relaxed atmosphere – don't rush! Try to relax yourself – the woman will pick up on your feelings!

Chaperones

Ask the woman if she wants a chaperone. All women should be offered a chaperone for personal or intimate examinations. They can be present for all or just part of the examination. If a chaperone is used make sure you document this and the name of the chaperone.

The Procedure

- Welcome
- Check her identity
- Explain the procedure fully – explain that the test may feel uncomfortable but should not be painful and she can stop the procedure at any time
- Answer any questions she has relating to the procedure
- Get informed consent

Let's get Practical!



How to use the Mannequin

- ✓ Make sure all equipment is present plus the mannequin
- ✓ Ensure a model cervix is attached in place
- ✓ Set the mannequin at an appropriate height on a flat surface.
- ✓ Be conscious the mannequin is of a firm texture therefore a little more force may be required when inserting the speculum.
- ✓ Alternate model cervixes are available to use if required.
- ✓ Proceed as below.

Visualising the cervix:

1. Ensure that the correct size and type of speculum is selected.
2. Offer to demonstrate the speculum.
3. Ensure that the blades of the Cusco speculum are closed for insertion.
4. Note - be aware that lubricant can obscure cervical cytology tests, so be careful where you apply it to the speculum if needing to use it – stay away from the tip of the speculum
5. Introduce the speculum. The speculum should be inserted into the vagina in a slightly downward motion. If the labia are flaccid, gently opening them with your other hand limits any dragging or pulling. The insertion should be a slow and seamless procedure.
6. Ensure that the speculum points down towards the posterior of the woman and insert into the vagina until flush with the perineum.
7. Ensure no pubic hair is caught, and that there is no pressure on delicate structures such as the urethral meatus and clitoris.
8. Check the woman's comfort
9. Open the speculum and look at the cervix (it is not necessary to fully open the speculum)
10. To do this you may need to ask the woman to cough or change position.
11. Fix the speculum into the correct position.

Note the colour, size, position, appearance, secretions and texture of the cervix.

Note any polyps or contact bleeding, presence/ absence of threads if intrauterine device is in situ.

In a woman who has never had a pregnancy, the cervical os will be small and round, otherwise it will often look like a horizontal line and can be irregular.

Note any nabothian cysts or follicles, which are a normal finding and have the appearance of small yellow nodules.



Taking the sample

It is vital the whole cervix is visualised and sampled to obtain a satisfactory sample.

CIN can develop anywhere in the vaginally exposed columnar epithelium so the whole of the transformational zone needs to be sampled.

The sample must include the whole circumference of the squamocolumnar junction (SCJ) and the adjacent 1cm of squamous epithelium

If the SCJ is not visible the sample must include cells from the canal in addition to the ectocervix

1. Using the Cervex-Brush insert the bristles of the brush into the endocervical canal so that the shorter outer bristles are in full contact with the ectocervix.
2. Using pencil pressure, **rotate the brush 5 x clockwise**

If the woman has a wide ectropion -

3. Sample the squamocolumnar junction using the same brush again in a clockwise direction.
4. Put the cells in the collection Thin Prep vial.

Using the endocervical brush –

If you cannot get the longer central fronds of the Cervix-Brush into the os (if it is tiny) you will need to also use an **endocervical brush** to take a further sample.

5. After taking the Cervix-Brush sample, use an endocervical brush by inserting it gently into the os, with the lower bristles showing, rotate the brush once clockwise.
6. Put the cells from both samples in the same vial and record on the cytology request form that 2 sampling devices were used and why.

Using Thin Prep – Putting the calls in the vial

7. Use a vigorous swirling motion to rinse the brush/ brushes in the fixative liquid in the vial

8. Push the brush/ brushes into the bottom of the vial at least 10 times, forcing the bristles apart with firm pressure.
9. Inspect the brush/brushes for any residual material and remove any remaining by passing the brush over the edge of the vial.
10. Close the lid and screw tight, with care not to over tighten.
11. Release the fix on the speculum and remove the speculum carefully ensuring that you have not trapped the vaginal walls or cervix in the speculum as it closes.
12. Dispose the speculum and PPE in the clinical waste bin.
13. Switch off the examination light and provide privacy for the woman to get dressed or rearrange her clothing. Ensure the woman has tissue available to wipe away any lubricant or discharge and that there is access to washing facilities and sanitary pads, if needed.

Tips on obtaining a sample

- Choose the speculum size carefully! A size that can be comfortably inserted. The appropriate size will be helpful in holding back the vaginal walls.
 - Post-menopausal ladies may have atrophy (thinning and shrinking of the tissues) and require a small speculum to avoid tearing the skin / causing any trauma
 - Consider using vaginal water-based lubricant with post-menopausal women.
 - First attenders – to begin with use the smallest speculum appropriate to the lady's size – you can always try a larger size if required.
 - In the case of prolapsed vaginal walls, sheath the speculum with a condom or a non-latex glove finger with the end cut off, or use a wider or long-bladed speculum. If available.
 - A long speculum is usually required for tall women. Also use if the cervix is in a posterior position.
- Ask the woman to lie on her left side
- Ask the woman to cough
- Ask the woman to place her hands or a pillow under her buttocks to tilt her pelvis.
 - Make sure the woman is comfortable and adjust position to make her as comfortable as possible
 - Ensuring that the woman has emptied her bladder
 - Ask if she would like you to talk through the procedure as it happens
 - Don't rush!
- Ask the woman to return at a different part of her menstrual cycle
- Seek help from another sample taker

Clinical Education Session

Learners Toolkit

Cervical Sampling

Name:

Date:



Evaluation of Learning and Assessment form:

Pre-clinical educations session – what are my learning needs?
Factors that have enabled me to learn & what areas have I found most useful:
Areas still to learn more about & action plan going forward with time scales and who may be able to help.
What did I enjoy most about the clinical education session?
Useful Resources:

Let's think about it ... Do you...

Know the correct indication cervical sampling?	
Take a good history?	
Document accordingly?	
Prepare the examination room and woman	
Explain and demonstrate the procedure to be undertaken?	
Explain the results procedure?	
Keep good records?	
Reflect on communication with the woman?	
Reflect on the woman's view of the procedure?	
Reflect on your view of the procedure?	
What can you learn from these reflections?	

Resources

[Genital examination in women | Royal College of Nursing | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](#)

Genital Examination in Women. (2020) A resource for skills and development and assessment. Clinical Professional Resource.

[Home - Royal Marsden Manual \(rmmonline.co.uk\)](#)

The Royal Marsden Manual of Clinical Nursing Procedures.

[Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board :: Right Person, Right Care \(icb.nhs.uk\)](#)

Local Services L & SC.

[Clinical topic guides \(rcgp.org.uk\)](#)

The Royal College of General Practitioners.

[Home - e-learning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](#)

Online modules available at e-learning for health

[Cervical screening: programme overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Evidence based information GOV.UK

[Cervical screening \(smear test\) | Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust \(jostrust.org.uk\)](#)

Jos Trust - useful for signposting patients to.

[Cervical screening - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

NHS website – useful for signposting patients to.

[Cervical screening | Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

Information and support for patients.