

NHS Screening Programmes Information Sheet

Cancer screening programmes

Cervical Screening Programme

- This test is also known as the cervical smear test
- The cervical screening test is not usually a test for cancer in women who attend for their screening regularly – it detects early changes in the cervix which, if untreated, could lead to cervical cancer in the future
- It is a very effective test – it is estimated to prevent three quarters of all cases of cervical cancer
- Since the national screening programme was introduced the number of cases of cervical cancer has dropped by almost half – an estimated 4,500 cases are prevented each year in the UK
- It is a free service on the NHS
- The first invitation for screening is sent just before a woman turns 25 years old, the test is then repeated every three years until age 49, then every five years from age 50 to 64
- Women over the age of 65 should be screened if they have not had a screening test since the age of 50 or if a recent test has been abnormal
- You should receive a letter asking you to make an appointment when you are due a test – contact your GP if you think you are due a cervical screening test but have not received a letter
- Further information can be found at
 - <http://patient.info/health/cervical-screening-cervical-smear-test-leaflet>
 - <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/about-cervical-cancer/cervical-screening-smear-test-and-abnormal-cells>

Breast Screening Programme

- The breast screening programme is a test looking for any changes in the breast with the aim of detecting breast cancer at an early stage
- The earlier breast cancer is detected the better the chance of a cure
- Around 1 in 8 women will develop breast cancer during their lifetime
- Breast screening prevents an estimated 1,300 deaths every year in the UK
- It is a free service offered by the NHS
- Currently all women aged 50 to 70 years are offered a routine breast screening test every three years.
- There is a national trial to extend the age range to include women aged 47 to 73 across certain randomly allocated parts of the country that will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of screening younger and older women

- If you are under the age of 50 routine breast screening is only available if you fill certain criteria
 - You have had breast cancer in the past
 - You have a first-degree relative who has had breast cancer at a young age
 - You are known to have a gene that increases your chance of developing breast cancer
- The breast screening programme is a rolling programme, meaning that women from different GP practices are invited in turn – this means that you may not receive an invitation for screening as soon as you turn 50 but you should receive your first invitation before you turn 53
- The screening itself involves having an X-ray of each of your breasts – this is called mammography
- More information can be found at
 - <http://patient.info/health/breast-screening>
 - <http://breastcancer.org/about-breast-cancer/how-is-breast-cancer-diagnosed/breast-screening>

Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

- Bowel screening aims to detect bowel cancer at an early stage and before symptoms start
- Detection at an early stage means there is a better chance that treatment will cure the cancer
- There are currently two methods of screening for bowel cancer – both are available free of charge on the NHS
- The first method is a test to detect traces of blood in your stools – this is called the faecal occult blood (FOB) test
- This is offered to people aged 60 to 74 every two years by a test kit that is sent in the post
- It is estimated that by 2025 over 2,000 lives could be saved every year in the UK due to screening with the FOB test
- The FOB test requires participants to complete a kit by using the cardboard sticks provided to smear two small samples of poo onto a special screening card. This needs to be completed for three separate bowel movements over a two week period
- The second method of screening is with flexible sigmoidoscopy
- This is a new screening programme where a one off test is offered to all adults at the age of 55
- Bowel scope is being slowly rolled out across the country so not everyone will be invited for this test
- This test is done with a tiny camera on the end of a small bendy tube, that is inserted into the back passage and allows the doctor or nurse to see the lining of the rectum, sigmoid colon and the lower part of the descending colon

- It is thought that combining the one-off flexible sigmoidoscopy with the existing FOB test could drastically increase the number of lives saved by bowel cancer
- More information can be found at:
 - <http://patient.info/health/screening-for-bowel-colorectal-cancer>
 - <https://www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk/about-bowel-cancer/screening/>

Non-cancer screening programmes

Diabetic Eye Screening Programme

- Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness in working age people in the UK
- Diabetic eye screening is offered nationally to all people aged 12 and over who have been diagnosed with diabetes
- Eligible people are offered screening on an annual basis, which consists of photographs of the retina being taken in each eye
- In some cases screening is offered more regularly to monitor changes that have been seen at the back of the eye – this is called digital surveillance
- In other cases the screening cameras are unable to get a picture of the back of the eye (due to cataracts, for example), and participants are referred for slit lamp biomicroscopy, which allows the screener to shine light around the obstruction in the eye to get an image of the retina
- If further assessment of treatment is required following screening, participants are referred to their local hospital eye services for an appointment with an ophthalmologist
- You should receive an invite letter from the screening programme when you are due a test – contact your GP if you think you are due a diabetic eye screening test but have not received a letter
- Further information can be found at:
 - <http://patient.info/health/diabetic-retinopathy-leaflet>
 - <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/diabetic-eye-screening/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
 - <https://diabetes.co.uk/diabetes-complications/retinopathy-screening.html>

Antenatal and Newborn Screening Programme

- Antenatal and newborn screening covers six individual NHS screening programmes for pregnant women and babies.
 1. Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening (SCT) – this screening programme is a genetic screening programme that identifies people who are genetic carriers for sickle cell, thalassaemia and other haemoglobin disorders.
If 2 people who are carriers have a baby together, there is an increased risk that their baby could inherit a haemoglobin disorder.

2. Infectious Diseases in Pregnancy Screening (IDPS) – this programme currently screens pregnant women for the following conditions: HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis.
 3. Fetal Anomaly Screening Programme (FASP) - offers screening for pregnant women to check the baby for fetal anomalies, Down's Edward's and Patau's syndrome.
 4. Newborn and Infant Physical Examination Screening (NIPE) – this programme screens newborns by 72 hours and again at 6-8 weeks for conditions relating to their heart, hips, eyes and testes
 5. Newborn Blood Spot Screening (NBBS) – this programme aims to identify rare conditions that can lead to serious illness, development problems and even death. This includes cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease, hypothyroid disease and metabolic conditions.
 6. Newborn Hearing Screening (NHSP) – aims to identify moderate, severe and profound deafness and hearing impairment in newborn babies. Early identification of hearing impairment gives children a better chance of developing speech and language skills, and of making the most of social and emotional interaction from an early age.
- Further information on each of these screening programmes can be found at the following links:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/sickle-cell-thalassaemia>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/infectious-diseases-in-pregnancy>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/fetal-anomaly>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/newborn-infant-physical-examination>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/newborn-blood-spot>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/population-screening-programmes/newborn-hearing>

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme

- Screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm is offered as a one-off test to men aged 65
- The aorta is the main blood vessel that runs from the heart, down through the abdomen and into the rest of the body
- Abdominal aortic aneurysm usually causes no symptoms, but if it bursts it can be fatal
- The screening test takes 15 minutes and involves an ultrasound of the abdominal region

- Screening is offered only to men as evidence shows that this group is far more likely to have an abdominal aortic aneurysm than women or younger men
- If a small or medium aneurysm is found then participants will be invited to undergo regular surveillance to ensure that it does not reach a dangerous size
- If a large aneurysm is found then participants are referred to a vascular surgeon that specialises in blood vessels to determine what further treatment is recommended
- Further information can be found at:
 - <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/abdominal-aortic-aneurysm-screening/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
 - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/conditions/abdominal-aortic-aneurysm>