

# Screening of cervical cancer



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Since the introduction of cervical screening in the 1980s, rates of cervical cancer have almost halved. This compares to 2,369 women diagnosed in 2008.

Over the last 10 years there has been a 77% increase in the incidence rate for women age 25-29, with 281 cases in 2008. For women aged 30-34 the rate increased by 29%, with 309 cases in 2008. In women aged 20-24 the incidence rate has remained fairly stable, with 39 cases in 2008. Coverage of screening has shown a downward trend in younger women since the mid 1990's. By 2008, the coverage rate for women aged 25-29 had fallen from a level of 67% in 1995 to 59%. This compares with a rate of 69% in women aged 25-49 years (those called for screening every 3-5

years) and 80% in women aged 50-64 years (those called for screening every 5 years), in 2008. Around 2,900 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in the UK every year. The national cervical cancer screening programme saves thousands of lives every year, but around 960 women die from the disease each year. Since 2008, girls aged 12 and 13 have been offered a vaccination against a virus that causes cervical cancer, called human papillomavirus (HPV). More recently, a catch-up programme has been introduced for girls aged 13 to 18 as well. This vaccine can prevent over 70% of cervical cancers.

In the UK Scientists estimate that cervical screening saves around 5000 lives each year. Cervical screening can prevent at least:

- 75% of cervical cancers in women in their 50s and 60s,
- 60% of cervical cancers in women in their 40s,
- 45% of cervical cancers in women in their 30s.

Cervical screening is

very effective but, like any screening test, it isn't perfect. In cervical screening, very few tests will find abnormal changes that aren't really there.

But one in five tests will miss something. Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether changes in the cervix will return to normal or progress to cancer.

This means that some women will be treated unnecessarily, for...