



Health (National Cervical Screening Programme) Amendment Act 2004

FACT SHEET 3

Enrolment in the National Cervical Screening Programme

What smear takers must tell women

Smear takers have always given detailed information to enable women to make an informed decision about the cervical smear test. The new Act lists this information. When women have their first smear, it requires smear takers to:

- explain the cervical smear procedure
- provide information regarding:
 - the importance of having regular cervical smears
 - the objectives of the National Cervical Screening Programme
 - the benefits and limitations of cervical screening
 - the benefits of participating in the Programme
 - who has access to information on the NCSP-Register and the uses that information may be put to
- advise women that the laboratory sends all cervical results to the Programme and these are entered onto the NCSP-Register. All women are automatically enrolled in the Programme unless they formally withdraw
- explain how they may withdraw from the Programme.

The Act also requires smear takers and colposcopists to provide information to women about the procedure and the Programme when having further cervical screening tests.

From March 2005, all smear results will be entered automatically onto the NCSP-Register unless the woman decides she does not want to be enrolled in the Programme.

Withdrawing from the Programme

Women have always been able to withdraw or opt-off from the Programme if they choose. How they withdraw or prevent their enrolment will change from March 2005.

When a woman withdraws from the programme she and her smear taker are responsible for her own screening.

This means the Programme will not provide a backup of the smear takers recall system. They will not receive a letter from the Programme if their smear result is unsatisfactory or abnormal; and the Programme will not check that they receive follow-up treatment if they have an abnormal smear.

A woman can withdraw by completing a "Withdraw from the Programme" form or writing to the Programme. Screening records on the NCSP-Register for women who withdraw will be deleted and no further information will be entered. Women will need to supply enough information to identify them and prevent someone with similar details from being withdrawn by mistake.

When a woman withdraws, the Programme is required to keep background details. These are name, date of birth, National Health Index (NHI) number (if known), address and ethnicity. This allows the Programme to correctly identify a woman who does not wish to take part in the Programme. This reduces the risk of future results being accidentally added to the National Cervical Screening Programme-Register against their wishes.

Their records will not be used for evaluation unless they develop cervical cancer.

Re-enrolling

A woman who has withdrawn from the Programme can re-enrol at any time by completing a "Re-enrol in the Programme" form or writing to the Programme.

If a woman withdraws and then re-enrols some years later, her smear history will start from that date.

Up until now, women have been able to stop individual smear results from going to the NCSP-Register. The new Act does not allow this, recognising that a complete cervical screening record is important to help smear takers, laboratories and specialists make accurate decisions about a woman's health care.