



National Cervical Screening Programme (NCSP) Change to Screening Start Age

Information for general practice and PHOs – July 2019

Welcome to the July update to inform you and the wider primary care sector about the steps that are being taken to implement the new cervical screening start age. You are welcome to circulate this update to all stakeholders that you consider interested in these changes.

From November 2019 the NCSP will increase the eligible start age for cervical screening from 20 to 25 years. The change in the screening start age will proceed within the current cytology based NCSP independently of the implementation of HPV primary screening.

Implementation Steps

To support successful implementation of the age change, the NSU recommends the following approach

Prior to the change in the screening start age:

- Until the age of screening is raised to 25, women between 20 and 24 years should *continue to be screened*, according to the current pathway.

After the change to the screening start age to 25 years:

- Women between 20 and 24, who have already been screened, should continue with screening
- Women under 25, who have not started cervical screening, can commence screening at 25
- Women can be invited to the screening programme from 24.5 years.

It is important to note that any women, including those outside the screening age range, who have concerning symptoms such as unusual vaginal bleeding should see their health care provider who will arrange appropriate tests.

There are a number of key work streams involved in this change but in this update we will focus on:

1. Primary Care Practice Management Systems (PMS) updates
2. Management of the clinical pathway
3. Monitoring

Primary Care Practice Management System (PMS) updates

- The PMS functions that support the NCSP are based on the current NCSP guidelines. These guidelines are being updated to specify that the eligible screening age is 25 – 69 years and the PMS updates will align with these guidelines.
- The objective of this work stream is to ensure that primary care providers are appropriately supported by their PMS vendors to implement the change to the screening start age.
- There has already been a high level analysis completed with Patients First and the PMS providers to understand the current functionality of the PMSs that support cervical screening invitation and recall processes.



- We are continuing to work with Patients First and the PMS vendors to confirm the current function of the PMS and establish the necessary change requirements and relevant scenarios.

The key requirements that are in scope are:

- Ensuring there is no change to any recall function for women who are on the screening pathway.
- Updating the 'set' starting age from 20 to 25 years for women who have not yet started screening.

The following requirements are out of scope:

- Any change to the PMS functions that support recalls for women currently enrolled in the cervical screening programme.
- Any change to the PMS functions that relates to payment or transfer of individual women's clinical information.

It is important to note that it is the Ministry's expectation that this age change will be a gradual implementation, given the approach that a 20 to 25 year old who has commenced screening will continue on the screening pathway.

We are keen for you to tell us whether there are any anticipated impacts for you in terms of reporting audit functions and interfacing systems. We will be seeking your feedback using an online survey.

Management of Clinical Pathway

The clinical pathway will not be impacted by the change to the screening start age. The Clinical Guidelines for Cervical Screening New Zealand will be updated to reflect the age change. We are reviewing the clinical pathway for management of women with abnormal bleeding.

Monitoring

The NCSP will continue its regular monitoring of programme performance, with additional focus on monitoring the direct impact of the change to screening start age, including cervical cancer incidence at younger ages.

To view the current monitoring reports (NCSP Independent Monitoring Report and NCSP Annual reports) please visit the [National Screening Unit](https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/independent-monitoring-reports): <https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/independent-monitoring-reports>

Queries

Frequently Asked Questions related to the change in the screening start age to 25 can be found on the NSU website: <https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/age-range-change-cervical-screening-0>

If you wish to discuss the updates associated with the change to the screening start age, please contact ncsp@health.govt.nz and include the title: AGE CHANGE PROJECT in the subject line.