



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

Information for general practice and PHOs – August 2019

This update will 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 stakeholders that are interested in these changes.

We are actively progressing with increasing the eligible start age for cervical screening from 20 to 25 years from November 2019. There are a number of key work streams involved in this change, but in this update we will focus on:

- Updated Implementation Steps
- Primary Care PMS changes update
- Communications approach to support the age change
- Management of the Clinical Pathway
- Monitoring
- Queries

We always welcome your comments, so please see the 'Queries' section if you wish to provide any feedback.

Updated Implementation Steps

Please note the updated advice from the NCSP regarding the successful implementation of the age change:

Prior to the change in November 2019:

- It is recommended that women aged 20 to 24.5 years of age who are not currently in the programme are *no longer invited* for screening.
- Women between 20 and 24, who have already been screened, should *continue to be screened*, according to the current pathway.

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

- Women between 20 – 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.



Primary Care Practice Management System (PMS) updates

PMS vendors (Medtech, MyPractice, Intrahealth, Indici and Best Practice) are working through a change request for their respective systems to support the cervical screening age change.

We are working towards these being included in their November release cycles. The timing of releases may vary slightly by PMS provider. We will confirm the release dates for each vendor in future updates.

What will change in the PMS?

The key change to the PMS function(s) is to support screening providers to invite women to start cervical screening at 25 years of age. **Women under 25 years who have already started on the cervical screening programme will continue to screen according to the current clinical pathway.**

The table below shows the two key scenarios that the PMS changes will support:

Current PMS function (that supports a screening start age of 20 years)	New PMS function Update to support the screening start age of 25 years (for those who have not started screening)
<p>A patient has a recall 'set' for 20 years of age within the PMS.</p> <p>When the patient reaches 20 years of age the PMS indicates that the patient is eligible for cervical screening and the health provider can invite the patient to start screening.</p>	<p>A patient with no cervical screening record who is under 25 years will have their first recall date changed from 20 to 25 years of age.</p> <p><i>Exception:</i> <i>Patients that have already been invited to start screening (the PMS has a record of contact about starting screening) but have no screening record will remain on the recall list.</i></p> <p><i>Screening providers can discuss with women who are under 25 and have already been invited whether they would like to postpone their first cervical screening test to 25 years of age.</i></p>
<p>A patient has started cervical screening and the practice has received a result. A recall will be set in the PMS that aligns to the clinical pathway.</p>	<p>There will be no change applied to these recalls.</p> <p>It is important that if a patient has started cervical screening, they continue cervical screening.</p>

The PMS changes will be tested by primary care representatives prior to release.

Your PHO and or practices may have additional systems (such as dashboards, practice intelligence or auditing tools) that are linked to the recall function in your PMS.

If you need additional detail to support any changes that you may need to make to these systems please get in touch with the NCSP team: ncsp@health.govt.nz



Communications approach supporting the age change

The change to the screening start age will be supported by a communications campaign, targeting women aged 25 to 29 years, to raise awareness of and encourage participation in cervical screening. The NCSP has engaged the Health Promotion Agency to develop this campaign and it is due to be delivered in early 2020.

The campaign will include the development of resources tailored to young women and will be informed by a strong consumer voice. A provider toolkit will also be created to support the campaign at a local level. We will be receiving feedback from a range of key groups over the coming months to support the campaign development.

The NSU is also exploring options to support the primary care invitation process, particularly for women in priority populations. The aim of this strategy is to assist in improving screening coverage rates for this 25 to 29 age group. In September, the NCSP will be reaching out to the sector with a discussion document to receive your feedback on the proposed approach.

Management of Clinical Pathway

It is important to note that 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

A dedicated web project page including links to key documents and FAQs related to the change in the screening start age to 25 is being regularly updated and can be found on the NSU website: <https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/age-range-change-cervical-screening>

FAQs can be found here: <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.