

Web-only Appendix: Information Leaflet

Cancer Screening Test

Introduction:

We would like to tell you about a test that is now available to detect the early signs of cancer. The sign that cancer may develop can be spotted in advance, and it can be prevented even before the cancer has started.

On average, around 10 out of every 100,000 (or 1500 women) die from this cancer in the UK each year. The risk is lower in younger women. Yet a quick, simple and painless test is available, that might have saved their lives. We would like to tell you more about this test.

What is the test?

The test can pick up abnormalities, which are the warning signs that cancer may develop if no treatment is given. As with all medical tests, this is not 100% perfect. *There is approximately 10% chance that the test report will be normal, even when there is an abnormality.* If you have any problems between tests, you should still consult your GP.

The test takes a few minutes and is painless, although slight discomfort may be felt occasionally. You could have the test at your GP surgery, or at a family planning clinic. You will be asked to undress from the waist down, and the test involves a vaginal examination.

What happens next?

After the test you will be told how, where and approximately when you will get the results. *Each time you have a test, there is a about 7% chance that you will be called back for further tests.* This may be because the test didn't show up clearly and another test is needed. *In 3% of tests, slight changes are detected in the cells that were tested. In this case, the test result is abnormal.*

What happens if I have an abnormal result?

You may be asked to have another test. Sometimes the abnormal changes return to normal by themselves. But if the repeat test still shows abnormal cells, you may need to have more extensive tests. You will be asked to go to a hospital for a closer examination and treatment. The treatment is a minor procedure done on an out-patient basis.

Not all people with abnormal results actually have any disease – in fact about 2000 women will be recalled for further tests for every 1 woman who has early cancer.

How often would I be tested?

You are recommended to have the test at least once every 5 years, from when you are 20 years old. *If you have the test regularly, the risk of you having this cancer will reduce to 1 per 100,000.*

What is the cost of this test?

Each time you have a test, this will cost the NHS about £35.

In summary, what are the benefits and possible problems of having this test for me?

Your risk of dying from this cancer without the test is about 10 in a 100,000. Your risk is lower if you are younger (below 45 years old). By having the test regularly (at least every 5 years), you could reduce your chances of dying from this cancer to 1 in 100,000.

However, every time you have a test, you have 7% chance of being called back, and 3% chance that the test shows an abnormality that needs more extensive assessment. To put it another way, if you have 7 tests in your lifetime, you have a 1 in 2 chance that you will be called back, and 1 in 5 chance that you will need more tests at least once. If you are called back and need more tests, there is 1 in 2000 chance that you actually have serious disease that needed treatment.

On the other hand, even if your test result is normal, you have 1 in 10 chance that you have an abnormality that wasn't spotted by the test.

Sections in italics are additional information that was not in the control leaflet.