

24th January 2011

Women in Scotland urged to add a smear test to their list of New Year resolutions as we enter Cervical Cancer Prevention Week

Women across Scotland are compiling lists of things to do this January as they make their New Year resolutions. NHS Scotland is asking them to add one life-saving task to their list, to attend their cervical screening appointment. With Cervical Cancer Prevention Week upon us (23 - 29 January 2011), there has never been a more appropriate time to make that commitment.

All women aged 20 – 60 across Scotland are invited to have a free, quick, cervical screening test every three years. Despite this invitation some never take up their appointment. Ignoring the invitation leaves women unprotected from the early signs of cervical cancer.

Many young women will now have received the HPV Immunisation which helps protect against the virus which can cause cervical cancer but NHS Borders are urging these women to also attend their cervical screening appointments. This brings together cervical cancer prevention for young women through the HPV immunisation programme with ongoing screening for those over 20 years. It is vital that each year these young women take up their invitation to provide ongoing protection.

Carol Colquhoun, National Screening Programme Co-ordinator said: "We want to encourage as many women as possible to go for their cervical screening test by putting it on their list of things to do.

"Every year in Scotland more than 400,000 women are invited for screening and a quarter of them do not take up the invitation.

Public Health Minister Shona Robison said: "Cervical screening saves lives, it's as simple as that. We're all very busy but it's really one thing you must make time for this year.

"If you're invited for a cervical screening test it's critical that you take up the invitation.

"The HPV vaccine is a fantastic step forward that will immunise young women against the virus that causes around two thirds of cases of cervical cancer, but it's not enough on its own. It is vital that all women, whether they have been immunised or not, take up their invitation to have a cervical screening test."

Dr Tim Patterson, Public Health Consultant, said "Cervical cancer can strike women at any age which is why women as young as 20 are offered cervical screening, even if they have had the HPV vaccine. If caught early, it can usually be treated successfully so it makes sense to make sure you go for a regular cervical screening test and speak to your GP or practice nurse if you have any concerns."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. Cervical screening has proven to be an effective method of reducing the incidence and mortality of cervical cancer. Screening provides a test for early identification of changes in cells in the cervix (neck of the womb) so that these can be simply and effectively treated. The screening test saves around 5000 lives in the UK every year and has prevented 8 out of 10 cervical cancers from developing.
2. In Scotland, all women aged 20 – 60 are eligible for cervical screening. Women of any age who have concerns at any time should speak to their GP or practice nurse.
3. In Scotland in 2008, a national immunisation programme to protect against the most common cause of cervical cancer, the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), was introduced for all girls in the S2 year of school, and for 2008-2011 for older girls born on or after 1 September 1990.
4. There are four leaflets available in Scotland from local Health Boards:
 - *The Cervical Screening Test: Put it on your list* - sent with the screening invitation
 - *The Cervical Screening Test: Your First Test* - for those who have been invited for the first time
 - *The Cervical Screening Test: Information for Lesbian and Bisexual Women* - to address specific questions considered by lesbian and bisexual women
 - *The Cervical Screening Test: Your Results Explained* - sent with screening results and designed to explain test results and what to expect as follow up.

The *Cervical Screening Test: Put it on your list* leaflets will be sent to women eligible for screening, along with their invitation and will be available in healthcare and community settings, and on-line at www.healthscotland.com/screening.aspx

5. Translations of the leaflets above are available to download in Chinese, Polish, and Urdu from <http://www.healthscotland.com/screening.aspx> and NHS Health Scotland will consider requests for other languages.
6. Two leaflets designed specifically for women with learning disabilities - [Keep yourself Healthy: Do I need a Smear Test?](#) and [Keep yourself healthy: A guide to having a smear test](#) - produced in partnership with FAIR are also available from local health promotion resource libraries or nhs.healthscotland-publications@nhs.net
7. For more information on the HPV Vaccination Programme visit: <http://www.fightcervicalcancer.org.uk/>
8. Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust is the UK's only dedicated cervical cancer charity offering support and information for those affected by cervical cancer and cervical abnormalities. www.jostrust.org.uk. Jo's Trust will be launching a helpline this Cervical Cancer Prevention Week. The number is **0808 802 8000** and the helpline will be available to patients carers and friends Monday – Friday providing information and support on a range of topics including screening concerns, screening results, cervical abnormalities, cervical cancer, treatments and survivorship issues.

Contacts:

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