



The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a global strategy to "eliminate cervical cancer," which means for every 100,000 people with a cervix less than 4 should experience cervical cancer. New Zealand's National Cervical Screening Programme has made significant progress toward this goal but we know there is still more to be done.

### About the human papillomavirus (HPV)

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the name given to a group of over 150 viruses that cause infection on the surface of the skin. More than 40 types of HPV affect the genital area and the throat (pharynx and larynx) and it's these types of HPV that are more likely to cause certain types of cancers.

HPV can be present as an infection of the skin which is not visible to the naked eye (subclinical infection). Many people with HPV do not know they have it and a person may be infected with more than one type of HPV at the same time.

**Nearly 85% of adults will contract HPV at some point in their lives** and having HPV is considered a natural consequence of human-to-human skin contact.

### Screening for HPV

HPV Primary Screening looks for the presence of human papillomavirus (HPV). **For most people an HPV infection clears by itself within two years** (especially in people under 30). Sometimes HPV can cause a persistent infection so screening for the virus helps participants and clinicians to know if additional diagnostic testing or treatment may be required.

### Screening test options

New HPV testing means most participants, after consultation with their healthcare provider, will be able to choose **one of two cervical screening test options:**

- **HPV vaginal swab test**, either a self-test or assisted by a clinician
- **A liquid based cytology sample**, previously referred to as a smear test, which is tested for HPV.

If HPV is detected cytology will be processed automatically without the person needing to return for another test.

### Screening eligibility and free screening eligibility

Wāhine/women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 69 who had intimate skin-to-skin contact, or any sexual activity, no matter their sexual orientation are encouraged to participate in the National Cervical Screening Programme (NCSP).

People should be encouraged to participate in the NCSP if they are a wāhine/woman, or person with a cervix, aged 25 to 69, who:

- has ever had intimate skin-to-skin or any sexual activity (even if they haven't been sexually active for decades)
- has only had non-penetrative sex (i.e., oral sex)
- is straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer
- is transgender, gender diverse, or non-binary and has a cervix
- has only been with one sexual partner
- has had the HPV vaccination or not
- is pregnant or has had a baby
- has been through menopause.

For more information by Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora online here: [www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/health-services-and-programmes/ncsp-hpv-screening](http://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/health-services-and-programmes/ncsp-hpv-screening)

