

## Questions and Answers From the Sector

**Can you please clarify if the launch date to start doing the HPV swabs is now 12 September? Or does the announcement regarding the funding for those eligible for free HPV screening mean that the programme still starts on 26 July, but the funding starts 12 September?**

HPV testing and the new funding both start on 12 September. For screen-takers, if you receive supplies of HPV test kits early, please DO NOT use these prior to the 12 September start date. Labs will only be set up to receive these samples from 12 September. Please encourage people to continue to screen under the current programme if they are due for a screen – don't wait until HPV testing is introduced on 12 September.

**The announcement states 'those eligible for free cervical screening include women and people with a cervix who are unscreened (have never had a screening test)' – does this mean anyone, no matter what age (i.e., even if 25yrs of age starting the screening programme) are funded? Or as currently stands, funded if you are 30yrs and over and haven't been screened?**

**We have received some feedback with regards to the statement, "This includes those populations that are at a higher risk of cervical cancer." There was concern this could be interpreted quite differently by providers and may need further clarification.**

To clarify, free screening will be available from 12 September for:

- All people who are 30 years and over who are unscreened (never had a screening test) or under-screened (haven't had a test in the past 5 years)
- All people requiring follow-up testing including test of cure (regardless of age)
- All CSC holders (regardless of age)
- All Māori and Pacific (regardless of age)

**Does the free screening include the second appointment if the patient needs to return for a speculum exam? Are people going to be charged twice if they need to come back post self-swab for LBC or is all the funding information in the CSP modules which are coming?**

For all participants who require an LBC sample to be taken, after HPV Other has been found, their second appointment will be free.

**Would that include a free screen at other providers (not just PHOs or Support to Screening) such as Family Planning?**

Yes, the priority population should be able to access free screening regardless of the provider they are seeing.

**Those who are under-screened i.e., haven't had a test in the last 5 years, are eligible for funded testing – will this still apply when the HPV testing is launched, and the recall period becomes 5 years?**

Under-screened will be defined as more than 5 years since a last cytology test, or more than 7 years since a last HPV Not Detected test.

**Could you please clarify the third option patients can opt for i.e., you can choose to have your healthcare provider take a sample from your cervix, what used to be called a smear test. (If HPV is found, this option also allows for your sample to then be checked for any cell changes). Is that a similar process as taking smears but only testing for cell changes if HPV is positive?**

Yes, it is the same test as is currently done (what many people still refer to as a smear test). In the current screening programme, that cell sample is sent to the lab for cytology testing. The difference in the new programme is that the cell sample will be sent to the lab and tested for HPV. Only if HPV is found will the sample then be cytology tested. This is called “reflex” testing (i.e., it will be done automatically on the same sample if HPV is found). For the screen taker, the process is the same as is done now, for those participants who choose that option.

There will be some people who have symptoms, and some who need specific follow-up tests after previous abnormalities. These groups will require both an HPV test and a cytology test (called a co-test) so need to have a cell sample taken from their cervix by their healthcare provider. Both these tests can be done from one LBC sample – you don’t need to send a swab sample as well as an LBC sample at the same time.

**Our cervical smear samples are currently tested by Medlab, this was to change to Pathlab with the initial launch date end of July. Will Pathlab still be taking over our cervical smear testing end of this month as planned or will the change from Medlab to Pathlab not occur until HPV testing is launched?**

The change from Medlab to Pathlab will continue in accordance with the originally agreed timelines. It is not changing due to the change in ‘go live’ date for HPV primary screening.

Medlab is still collecting samples from practices on behalf of Pathlab but samples collected after 1 July 2023 are being reported at Pathlab if SurePath, or in some cases for a limited time only, at APS in Auckland if they are ThinPrep samples. Please contact Pathlab directly if you have further questions about the arrangements for your practice.

**Our clinics are asking a couple of questions. We hear that the cost of the self-swab tool is equivalent to the current smear-taking tool. We also understand that the volumes allocated for free cervical screening at practice level remains the same. Our question is what is the \$7.3 million being used to cover?**

There is no cost to access the HPV primary screening test kits. Based on New Zealand HPV primary screening research, we anticipate initially it will take providers about the same amount of time until they get familiar with providing the new test, then it is likely that it is quicker than current smear-taking. The \$7.3 million is to be used to ensure that priority group participants who are being screened do not need to pay a co-payment, i.e., they access a free service.

**We are receiving enquiries from our GPs wondering if there is going to be any funding for HPV swabs along the lines of the current cx funding, or if there are any guidelines on cost/charges etc?**

The priority populations should be provided with free screening. The co-payment for non-priority populations needs to be set by the general practice as it is a private patient co-payment.

**Nurses are concerned that they are not going to know how to document results before the changeover. Will any of the e-learning modules cover codes, recalls and recommendations for PMS use?**

The e-Learning modules include clinical training on the new HPV primary screening test. Each PMS vendor will be implementing different changes that work in their systems. They will be in touch regarding the updates and providing guidance.

**Just reaching out to explore options for including people who have serious mental health and addiction issues amongst the prioritised groups for this new HPV screening opportunity. We have successfully worked with partners the immunisation team to address prioritisation of this group as well. We're keen to highlight that people with MH&A issues are a priority group in the NZ Cancer Action Plan (2019-2029) Manatū Hauora, 2019.**

People who have serious mental health and addiction issues would be able to access free screening if they meet the criteria which applies generally. To clarify, free screening will be available from 12 September for:

- All people who are 30 years and over who are unscreened (never had a screening test) or under-screened (haven't had a test in the past 5 years)
- All people requiring follow-up testing including test of cure (regardless of age)
- All CSC holders (regardless of age)
- All Māori and Pacific (regardless of age)

**When we are able to identify the unscreened unenrolled population and they are sent letters inviting them to participate in the Programme, how and to where will the NCSP be directing them to go for a test?**

The letter sent by the NCSP-Register to those who are eligible to start to screen, encouraging them to make an appointment for their cervical screening test, will say: *You can book your screen with your regular healthcare provider if you have one, another community health provider, or with Family Planning. Go to [www.healthpoint.co.nz](http://www.healthpoint.co.nz) and search for "cervical screening" to find services in your area.*

**This is great news. Do we go out to the sector with this message i.e., forward the email or is there a prepared communication for the sector coming for distribution?**

Yes, please forward the email announcement to your networks