



What is screening?

Screening is identifying people who are at risk of developing a disease before they show signs of having it.

A screening test is not the same thing as a diagnostic test:

- screening programmes identify people at a higher risk of developing a disease;
- diagnostic tests confirm the presence of an existing disease.

If you are identified as being at a higher risk, it is vital you follow up with your doctor. In general, the earlier a disease is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat.

The disease detectives

Pathology is the study of disease. Millions of pathology tests are carried out each year across the UK. Some of these tests are part of national screening programmes.

Pathologists perform tests on screening samples. For example pathologists and scientists examine the sample from a cervical screening test under a microscope and identify any abnormalities.

Types of screening test and when you'll be offered them...

Cancer Screening

Bowel cancer

Men and women aged 60 to 74 - every two years, using a home test kit, which is used to collect a stool sample.

An additional one - off test called bowel scope screening is gradually being introduced in England for those aged 55 and over.

Breast cancer

Women aged 50 to 70 - every three years, using an X-ray.

Cervical cancer

• Women aged 25 to 49 - every three years.

• Women aged 50 to 64 - every five years.

A doctor or nurse uses a small, soft brush to gently collect some cells from the surface of the cervix.

Genetic Screening

Infectious diseases

(hepatitis B, HIV and syphilis)

8 to 12 weeks during pregnancy, using a blood test.

Inherited conditions (sickle cell disease, thalassaemia and other haemoglobin disorders)

10 weeks during pregnancy, using a blood test.

Down's, Edwards and Patau syndrome

10 to 12 weeks during pregnancy, using a blood test and an ultrasound.

Did You Know?

1. Rates of cervical cancer have almost halved since screening was first introduced.

2. Screening is a choice. Although it is recommended by doctors, no one is forced to take part.