

# HPV test detects more pre-cancerous cells than conventional smear test

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Human papillomavirus (HPV) screening detects more cervical severe pre-cancerous lesions than conventional cervical screening, finds a study published in the British Medical Journal today.

This is the first study to include the [HPV](#) test in an established cervical screening programme and the findings are important for cervical cancer prevention, says Dr Ahti Anttila at the Finnish Cancer Registry, who led the research.

HPV is a common sexually transmitted infection seen most often in young women and adolescents. There are more than 100 types of HPV - some cause only [genital warts](#), but others cause cancers including cervical cancer.

The study involved 58,282 women aged 30-60 years who were invited to participate in the routine cervical screening programme in Southern Finland between 2003 and 2005.

Women were randomly allocated to either an HPV test, with further screening if the test was positive, or to conventional cytology screening (the smear test or [Pap test](#)). Women were then tracked for a maximum of five years.

The results show that HPV screening was more sensitive than conventional cytology screening in detecting severe pre-cancerous lesions on the surface of the cervix (known as cervical intraepithelial neoplasia or CIN III+).

Although the overall number of cervical cancer cases detected was small, the authors conclude that "considering the high probability of progression of CIN III lesions in women aged 35 years or more, our results are important for prevention of [cervical cancer](#)."

Provided by British Medical Journal

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