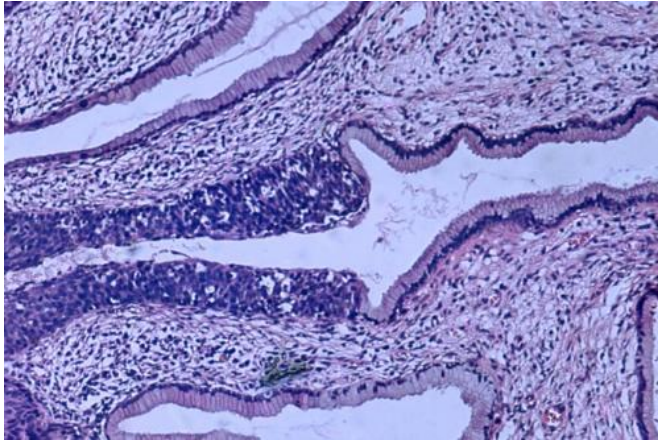


More than two-thirds of cervical cancer deaths prevented by screening

19 September 2016



High grade dysplasia (carcinoma in situ) in the uterine cervix. The abnormal epithelium is extending into a mucus gland to the left of centre. This disease can progress to invasive cancer (squamous cell carcinoma) of the cervix. Credit: Haymanj/public domain

Cervical screening prevents 70 per cent of cervical cancer deaths and if all eligible women regularly attended screening this would rise to 83 per cent, according to research led by Queen Mary University of London (QMUL).

The new research, funded by Cancer Research UK and published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, is the first to establish the impact that screening has on deaths from cervical cancer by using screening information from [women](#) who have been diagnosed with the disease.

The researchers studied the records of more than 11,000 women in England who had been diagnosed with cervical cancer and found that, without screening, an additional 1,827 more women would die from the disease. But if all women aged between 25 and 64 were screened regularly, an extra 347 lives could be saved – extensively reducing the number of deaths from

the disease.

The biggest impact of screening is among women aged between 50-64 where there would be five times more women dying from cervical cancer if there were no screening.

Lead researcher Professor Peter Sasieni from QMUL's Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine said: "This study looked at the impact of [cervical screening](#) on deaths from the disease and estimated the number of lives the screening programme saves each year.

"Thousands of women in the UK are alive and healthy today thanks to cervical screening. The cervical screening programme already prevents thousands of cancers each year and as it continues to improve, by testing all samples for the [human papilloma virus](#), even more women are likely to avoid this disease."

In England around 800 women die from [cervical cancer](#) each year. Cervical cancer screening is offered in the UK to women aged between 25 and 64. The screening programme invites women every three years between the 25 and 49; after that they are invited every five years until they're 64.

Dr Claire Knight, health information manager at Cancer Research UK, said: "Whether or not to go for screening is an individual choice, but Cancer Research UK recommends women take up the offer to attend cervical screening when invited.

"It's important to remember that cervical screening is for women without symptoms. Women who have any unusual or persistent bleeding, pain, or change in vaginal discharge - even if they've been screened recently and whatever their age - should get it checked out by their GP. Chances are it won't be cancer but, if it is, getting it diagnosed and treated early can make a real difference."

More information: Rebecca Landy et al. Impact of cervical screening on cervical cancer mortality: estimation using stage-specific results from a nested case–control study, *British Journal of Cancer* (2016). [DOI: 10.1038/bjc.2016.290](https://doi.org/10.1038/bjc.2016.290)

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

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