

# HerLife HerHealth



PRIMARY CARE  
WOMEN'S HEALTH FORUM

## Advice on supporting patients at cervical screening appointments

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## Advice on supporting patients at cervical screening appointments

### Tips for you

#### ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

Ask if women know what cervical screening is for, how long it lasts, what happens during the test, what instruments are used and what the results might mean. Have they heard of HPV? Do they think they will be told they have cancer? Make sure they have a full understanding.

#### MAKE IT CLEAR THEY ARE IN CONTROL

Tell them the test shouldn't hurt, but it may feel uncomfortable. Ask them to tell you if it does hurt and let them know they can say "stop". Always find out about pre-existing conditions that could cause greater discomfort. Do they know they can ask for a smaller speculum or to be in a different position? Simply knowing this may make them feel better, even if they don't use it. Feeling embarrassed and awkward is perfectly normal, so let your patient know that.

#### TAKING THE TEST

Make sure the woman has given consent before starting. Look out for visual cues that they are still comfortable, like facial expression and body movement, throughout the test. Tell them what you are going to do before you do it.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

Does your practice offer screening at flexible times, such as after working hours or at the weekend? Is a hoist available for those with a disability? Knowing your current limitations and ways to address these, like hosting drop-in clinics, can help.

#### INCREASING ATTENDANCE

Understanding who your non-attenders are is vital. Sometimes reaching them is as simple as displaying information prominently, while others may prefer communication through community groups. Consider training for staff including pharmacists, receptionists and health trainers, so they can positively raise awareness.

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