

NHS England and NHS Improvement - Midlands
Public Health Commissioning Team
St Chad's Court
Hagley Road
Birmingham
B16 9RG

Friday, 6th March 2020

Dear Practice Manager,

Re: Cervical screening update: Test kit supplies, laboratory turnaround times and sample taker training guidance

Test kit supplies

You will have been made aware of recent stock shortages across the NHS Cervical Screening Programme relating to the supply of Hologic ThinPrep vials and cervix brushes.

We have been informed that Hologic will be increasing their manufacturing capacity throughout March to ensure this issue does not reoccur in the future and will continue to work with providers to ensure continuity of service in the interim. Hologic apologises for this issue and the associated impact on service delivery and is working hard to ensure normal service resumes as soon as possible.

If you experience any shortages of cytology vials and/or cervix brushes, then please contact the regional HPV Laboratory at Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (RWT) in the first instance:

Stock Ordering: Tel: 01902 734544 (e) rwh-tr.pathologyorders@nhs.net

If, having contacted the regional laboratory, you still do not have enough vials to screen any booked or new patients, then please keep a record of patient details to call these patients back once supplies become available.

Sample turnaround times

We would also like to keep you informed of the latest position regarding sample turnaround times across the West Midlands area.

We can confirm that all patients who have had samples taken before 1st December will have received their results. Results have now been sent for 93% of samples taken in December, 82% of samples taken in January and for just under 10% of samples taken in February.

The regional hHPV laboratory at Royal Wolverhampton Trust (RWT) is using all available resources to reduce turnaround times and has provided assurances that older samples are prioritised to help reduce waiting times for patients. Waiting times for patients are coming down. RWT expect to be back to steady state processing (14-day turnaround) by the end of April. We are receiving daily monitoring reports from the laboratory to keep informed of progress.



Key messages for sample takers:

- Please ensure that people are advised at the time of their cervical screening appointment that there may be a delay in receiving results. Remind people that the delay in receiving their result is unlikely to cause or increase the risk of clinical harm to them. It will also have no implications for any subsequent treatment that is required.
- Please advise people that if they experience significant delays and are worried, to contact your practice or the clinic where their sample was taken. Practices can contact the laboratory with urgent patient results and backlog queries as follows: Tel: 01902 695939 rwh-tr.Cytology@nhs.net.
- It is possible that due to the current delays in reporting results to the call/recall service, some women will receive a reminder letter and attend your practice for a repeat sample. Could you therefore please check if the patient has recently had a sample taken (and the results are not yet available). If this is the case the additional sample is not required, and the patient should be advised of the delay as outlined above.

Updated sample taker training guidance

National guidance on the training of cervical sample takers has been updated and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-cervical-sample-taker-training>.

Training providers and cervical screening mentors need to be aware of important changes to the education pathway. These are described in the guidance:

- the introduction of an interim assessment which the trainee sample taker must complete before starting their unsupervised clinical practice
- the trainee's mentor conducts the interim assessment (refer to section 5 of the education pathway)
- a minimum of 12 hours for the initial training (theory) course; this includes at least 3 hours practical training where the sample takers can practise their technique on a pelvic model
- the trainee sample taker must take 20 acceptable samples as determined by national guidance before undertaking a final clinical assessment (the laboratory no longer provides feedback to trainees on their TZ sampling)

All trainee sample takers who sign up for training from 1 March 2020 must follow the new education pathway.

We will keep you informed of developments as we become aware of further updates.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Andrew Dalton

Consultant Screening and Immunisation Lead
Public Health England and NHS England