



Cervical Screening Opt-out Process Summary

The Scottish Cervical Screening Programme is available to eligible individuals (women, trans men and non-binary individuals with a cervix) between 25 and 64 years of age. Those individuals who choose not to be invited for further cervical screening samples to be taken may wish to follow the opt-out process.

For the name of these individuals to be removed from the list of eligible participants, certain conditions must be satisfied:

1. The individual must be offered sufficient information, in a format accessible to them, to enable them to make an informed decision about withdrawing from the cervical screening programme. This should include information on the condition being screened for (cervical cancer and its precursors), the screening process (including risks and benefits) and the consequences of attending or declining screening.
2. The individual must be informed that through withdrawing from the programme they will be prevented from receiving future invitations or reminders about cervical screening, although they will be contacted every 5 years to remind them about their opt-out status.
3. It has been made clear that individuals can return to the cervical screening programme at any time.

[A smear test could save your life \(healthscotland.com\)](https://www.healthscotland.com) - for PDF cervical screening information in easy read and other language formats

[Cervical screening \(smear test\) in Scotland | NHS inform](https://www.nhs.uk) - for online cervical screening information and videos

Appropriate use of a Disclaimer Form

- It is essential that a GP / Practice nurse discusses opting-out with the individual. It is the responsibility of the healthcare professional to ensure the individual has the opportunity to be fully informed of the benefits and risks of screening and the benefits and risks of opting-out.
- Some individuals may not wish to enter a discussion. This must be respected and documented in the clinical record.
- For individuals who wish to opt out, it is the responsibility of the GP practice to issue a disclaimer form for signature.
- It is recommended that disclaimers are used with caution. Individuals should only sign when the healthcare professional has made efforts to ensure they are making an informed decision.
- Disclaimers should only be signed by the individual in the presence of the GP / Practice nurse. They should not be posted / emailed out to the individual.
- A record of the disclaimer form should be kept in the individual's clinical record. This includes storing an electronic copy of the signed disclaimer form in the Docman record (or similar).
- Individuals should be advised that if they experience any unusual bleeding, including bleeding after sex or between periods, then they should contact the Practice.

Implications of opting-out

When a disclaimer form has been signed, the individual will be removed from the Call / Recall and will no longer receive invitations for further cervical screening. Individuals will be contacted immediately confirming their status and thereafter every 5 years from SCCRS, in the form of a letter, to remind them of their opted-out status.

Alterations to the SCCRS record

- Only when the individual and a healthcare professional have signed the disclaimer form, should the 'Opted out' exclusion status be applied to the individual's SCCRS status by the primary care team.
- There is no requirement to send a copy of the completed disclaimer form to the screening department.
- When the opt-out alert appears on Call / Recall, the individual's SCCRS history will be checked, and the Call / Recall officer will confirm with the Practice.
- If the Practice advises the opt-out status has been applied in error, the Practice should close the exclusion and make a note of the error in the individual's clinical record. Call / Recall staff will apply a journal entry.

Opting-out reversal

If an individual's opted out exclusion is closed on SCCRS, or if they subsequently have a sample reported on SCCRS, they will be immediately re-included into the cervical screening programme.

Barriers to screening

Individuals should be encouraged to make an informed choice: they have the right not to take part in screening. It is important that the healthcare professional aims to remove any barriers to screening.

This summary has been prepared from and should be read in conjunction with the document:
Opting-out from the Scottish Cervical Screening Programme, Guidance paper for healthcare professionals, updated June 2022

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Practice Letterhead

Cervical Screening Disclaimer

I do not wish to receive any more invitations to have cervical screening. I confirm that I have understood the information that has been provided by the practice nurse/GP explaining the purpose of cervical screening tests and how having regular screening reduces the risk of developing cancer of the cervix. I also understand that I will only be contacted every five years to advise me of my 'opt-out' status and that I will not be regularly invited for screening.

I understand that I can change my mind and have cervical screening tests in the future. All I have to do is to contact my Practice and make an appointment.

Signature of Patient..... Date.....

Full name.....

Date of Birth or CHI.....

Address.....

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Witnessed by

Signature of Healthcare professional.....

Designation..... Date.....

Advice for Practices:

- Please update the SCCRS application with the 'opt-out' status of the patient.
- Please store this signed document in the patient's medical record
- There is no requirement to send a copy of this signed disclaimer to the Screening Department