

Abnormal Cervical Smears

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Overview

All women of reproductive age starting at age 25 (or before if they become sexually active) should have routine cervical smear tests to detect abnormal cell changes and the HPV (Human Papilloma Virus). Once a woman starts having regular smear screens from time to time she may have an abnormal cervical smear. The most common abnormal smear is a borderline or inflammatory smear test result, this indicates that slight changes have been detected in the cervical tissue cells. This means is that the cells are not perfectly normal although they are not exactly abnormal either. This can cause distress and worry for a lot of women so it's important to realise that in the majority of cases there is no need to worry. The changes are minor and over time will most likely return to normal without treatment as the body's immune system clears the inflammation.

The reason a smear test may have returned a borderline or inflammatory result is sometimes due to the cervix being a irritated or due to an infection that the body was fighting when the smear was taken. The woman be asked to return for a re-test within three to six months just to ensure everything is normal again. Assuming the re-test returns a normal smear result there will be another re-test again in six months to ensure the cells are still normal. If they are then smears return to a normal schedule. If HPV is detected the virus will be classified into high risk and low risk strains. If a woman does not have HPV or has the low risk strains the risk of developing cervical cancer is statistically the same as any other woman who is HPV clear. If one of the high-risk strains is detected then she has a significantly increased risk of developing cervical cancer and should have annual smear tests and investigate treatment for HPV.

About 10% of women who have had a cervical smear test will be recalled for a repeat test. Reasons for recalls vary between an inadequate collection of cells to cell abnormalities. However around 90% cervical smear tests return a normal result. Abnormal test result report exactly what type or level of abnormal cells were detected.

1 in 20 test results will return with borderline changes or mild changes, known as mild dyskaryosis and sometimes CIN1. These women will be advised to return for a further smear test in 6 months and very often the cells will have returned to normal without the need for treatment within that time.

1 in 100 test results will return with moderate cell changes, known as CIN2. These women will usually be offered a colposcopy and treatment.

1 in 200 test results will return with severe cell changes, known as CIN3. These women must be treated urgently.

Less than 1 in 1000 will return a result showing invasive cancer. These women will be referred to a specialist unit for immediate treatment.

Several terms are commonly used to describe precancerous, or pre-invasive, abnormalities. The system used most frequently in the UK is known as cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia (CIN).

CIN is divided into grades. Grade I (mild), Grade II (moderate) and Grade III (severe). These grades are related to the risk of any cervical cell changes developing into cancer.

Several studies have illustrated that of the women who have CIN III and don't receive adequate treatment, 36% will develop an invasive tumour 20 years later. Although women with CIN I have 47 times the normal risk of developing cervical cancer, 50 per cent of the time the cells will revert to normal if left untreated.

Conventional Medicine Treatment

The conventional medicine treatment options are, cold coagulation, large loop excision of the transformation zone (LLETZ), straight wire excision of the transformation zone (SWETZ), needlepoint excision of the transformation zone (NETZ), laser treatment and cone biopsy. All these treatments remove the abnormal cells and allow new cells to develop which should be normal cells.

Natural Medicine Treatment

There is no natural treatment for CIN III or Invasive cervical cancer. However, for borderline changes there are various naturopathic treatments which boost the immune system's ability to return the cervical cells to normal and eliminate HPV with a repeat smear in 3 months. If CIN I or II is detected a naturopathic treatment to eliminate the abnormal cells is available as an alternative to the more invasive conventional medicine treatments above, again with a repeat smear in 3 months.

Our Female Healthcare Philosophy

At the Women's Natural Health Clinic, we specialise in providing comprehensive natural reproductive, gynaecological, obstetric and general healthcare for females from adolescence to post-menopause. Our approach is to integrate techniques in both oriental and western medical diagnosis to formulate a naturally oriented treatment plan combining acupuncture, herbal medicine, naturopathic medicine, nutritional therapy, exercise and lifestyle. Each treatment plan is tailored specifically to each individual woman maximizing results.

Please email us at enquiries@naturalgynae.com with questions, we are more than happy to provide any information via email that will assist you in deciding which treatment approach would be best for you

For more information, contact details and appointments click here www.naturalgynae.com