**DID YOU KNOW THAT SCREENING CAN PROTECT YOU FROM CERVICAL CANCER?**

Cervical screening is a test which checks a sample of cells from your cervix (the neck of your womb). It looks for certain types of human papilloma virus (HPV) which can cause abnormal cells to develop. If these types of HPV are found, the cells are then checked for abnormal changes which could turn into cancer if not treated.

The test is carried out by a female nurse and should take less than 5 minutes, and the whole appointment only takes about 10 minutes. When you go for your test, you’ll need to undress from the waist down and will be given a sheet to put over you. As you lie on the bed a small smooth tube will be put into your vagina so that a small sample of cells can be taken from your cervix using a soft brush. It is then removed and you can get dressed.

Don’t be put off by this. It may feel a bit uncomfortable but isn’t painful, and there’s no need to be embarrassed as the medical staff who perform the test do lots of them and are used to it.

You will get a letter inviting you to attend your GP practice for cervical screening at regular intervals depending on your age. It starts just before you turn 25, and then from:

* 25 to 49, it’s every 3 years
* 50 to 64, it’s every 5 years
* 65 or older, you will only be invited if 1 of your last 3 tests was abnormal.

There is no need to go for cervical screening if you have had a total hysterectomy to remove all of your womb and cervix.

You can find more information on cervical screening and cancer on the NHS website.

*Sent by Drs Virmani and Bedi’s patient participation group*