



National Cervical Screening Programme (NCSP) Change to Screening Start Age

Information for general practice and PHOs – September 2019

The change to the cervical screening start age, from 20 to 25 years, will be implemented from November 2019. This update informs you and the wider primary care sector about the steps that are being taken to implement the new screening start age. We encourage you to please to circulate this update to stakeholders that are interested in these changes.

All previous updates can be found on the NSU project page: <https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/age-range-change-cervical-screening>.

In this update we focus on:

- Implementation Steps
- Primary Care Practice Management System changes
- Communications approach to supporting the age change
- Queries

We always welcome your comments - please see the 'Queries' section if you wish to provide feedback.

Implementation Steps

As noted in the August update, please see below for the updated advice from the NCSP particularly the recommendation to stop inviting women under 24.5 years of age to commence screening.

In the transitional period between now and November 2019, the NCSP is recommending the following approach:

- Women under 24.5 years of age who are not currently in the programme are *no longer invited for screening*.
- Women under 25 who have already been screened, should *continue to be screened* according to the current pathway.

After the change to the screening start age to 25 years:

- Women under 25, who have already been screened, should *continue with screening*.
- Women under 25, who have not started cervical screening, can *commence screening at 25*.
- Women can be invited to the screening programme from 24.5 years.

It is important to note that any women, including those outside the screening age range, who have concerning symptoms such as unusual vaginal bleeding should see their health care provider, who will arrange appropriate tests.

Primary Care Practice Management System (PMS) changes

We are working closely with Patients First and PMS vendors (Medtech, MyPractice, Intrahealth, Indici and Best Practice) to ensure the systems updates will occur in November. We have confirmed the requirements based on the change request for their respective systems to support the cervical screening age change. We will work through the test scenarios and complete testing to ensure the updates are successfully implemented in the November release cycles. The timing of releases may vary slightly by PMS provider. We will confirm the release dates for each vendor in our next October update, once confirmed with each vendor.



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What will change in the PMS?

The key change to the PMS function(s) is to support screening providers to invite women to start cervical screening at 25 years of age. Women under 25 years who have already started on the cervical screening programme will continue to screen according to the current clinical pathway.

What you need to consider:

PHO's and practices may have additional systems (such as dashboards, practice intelligence or auditing tools) that are linked to the recall function in your PMS.

If you need additional detail to support any changes that these additional systems require, please get in touch with the NCSP team: ncsp@health.govt.nz

Communications approach to support the age change

The NCSP is currently working to ensure that our printed and online materials are updated to reflect the change to the screening start age, including the [Time to Screen website](#). Primary care providers are encouraged to review their own communication materials to ensure that any reference to the screening age change are updated appropriately.

In October, we will be sending you information to support communication with women about the age change. In the meantime, we have created a 'Consumer information' document that can be printed and shared with young women to help explain the age change: <https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/age-range-change-cervical-screening>

The NCSP is continuing our work with Health Promotion Agency to deliver a nationwide media campaign from February 2020. This campaign, targeting 25 to 29 year old women, aims to raise awareness of the importance of cervical screening and inform them of the upcoming age change. We are currently testing concepts with priority consumer audiences and stakeholders to inform the final campaign design. The campaign will be supported by a provider toolkit including key programme messages and resources for those working in the sector. These updated resources will be available from early 2020.

Direct notification approach – discussion document feedback

You will have noted that we are currently consulting with the sector regarding a proposed direct notification approach to women. This approach is to notify young women of their eligibility for cervical screening, with the objective of complementing primary care provider's existing invitation and recall processes and improving participation in cervical screening for the 25 to 29 age group.

The deadline for providing feedback on this proposal is **5pm 4 October 2019**. Please get in touch with the NCSP team if you have not received this discussion document and wish to provide your feedback.

Queries

A dedicated web project page including links to key documents and FAQs related to the change in the screening start age to 25 is being regularly updated and can be found on the NSU website: <https://www.nsu.govt.nz/health-professionals/national-cervical-screening-programme/age-range-change-cervical-screening>

If you have any queries regarding this upcoming programme change, please contact ncsp@health.govt.nz, and please include the title **AGE CHANGE PROJECT** in the subject line.