

Optional Services Tests

As part of your health screening appointment, you are entitled to additional optional tests to support your health and wellbeing journey. You are advised to read the test descriptions and consider the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the test is clinically suitable for you.

Should you wish to book any of the below, please complete the following form and our Central Services Team will be in touch to arrange your appointment.

Please note these services are provided by our third party providers, and not ToHealth.

Mammograms

A mammogram is an imaging investigation used for breast screening to detect small changes in breast tissue, which may indicate a cancer that may be too small to feel on examination. A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast which uses low amounts of radiation. The NHS Breast Screening programme first starts to automatically invite women between the ages of 50 and 53, with subsequent invitations being given 3 yearly until 71 years age. After the age of 71 years screening can still be performed every 3 years, but automatic invites will no longer be sent out. Screening below the age of 50 is not usually advised as the risk of breast cancer generally is very low, mammograms are more difficult to read due to denser breast tissue and there is little evidence that screening in this age group reduced deaths from breast cancer. The only exception to this would be a significant family history or personal history of breast cancer – where a different approach to screening may be taken.

Advantages of breast screening:

- Breast cancers can be detected at an earlier stage, with almost all women who have been diagnosed at the earliest stage are likely to be cured. Early stage breast cancers may also require less treatment.
- Cancer Research UK reports that breast cancer screening reduces the number of deaths in the UK by breast cancer by 1,300 per year.

Disadvantages of breast screening:

- Results can be a false positive – this is where the result of the test has detected something suspicious when actually it is non-cancerous, which could lead to anxiety and unnecessary further investigations.
- Results can be a false negative – this is where a breast cancer has been missed by the test, hence why it is important to continue to remain vigilant and self-examine regularly despite a negative result.
- Certain types of breast cancers will not cause any problems and hence may not necessarily require treatment. Currently, it is not possible to determine whether a cancer will grow quickly, slowly or not at all and hence almost all women who have breast cancer will have surgery to remove it along with possible radiotherapy, hormone therapy and chemotherapy. The 2012 breast screening review found that screening led to 4,000 women being over-diagnosed in the UK each year.
- Mammography uses small amount of radiation – but the exposure is known to be minimal.



Smear Tests

A smear test, or cervical screen, checks for abnormalities in your cervix which may develop into a cancer if left untreated. Smear tests also test for a virus called the human papilloma virus (HPV) which can cause cervical cells to become abnormal leading to cervical cancer. Regular smear tests are important and the NHS cervical screening programme offers screening every three years to women aged 25-49, every five years to women aged 50-64 and if you are over 65 where one of the last three tests was abnormal. In the first instance, you are recommended to follow the NHS cervical screening programme, but if you fall outside this age range or would like more regular screening you can complete this privately. It is worth noting that cervical cancer is very rare in people under the age of 25 and may lead to unnecessary investigations of abnormal cell changes which often the body rectifies itself.

Advantages of cervical screening:

- It can help prevent cervical cancer by recognizing abnormal cells that should be removed as they may develop into cervical cancer.

Disadvantages of cervical screening:

- Results can be a false positive – this when the test incorrectly identifies abnormal changes, which could lead to unnecessary anxiety and further investigations.
- Results can be a false negative – this is when the test fails to identify/misses an abnormal change.
- If treatment is indicated for removal of abnormal cells, these treatments can cause bleeding for a few days afterwards or infection. If more than a usual amount of cervical tissue is needed to be removed then there is an increased chance of a premature birth in any future pregnancies.

Testicular Tests

There is currently no screening test for testicular cancer and usually testicular lumps are found on self-examination or by chance. Once a lump is found further tests can be arranged to determine the nature of the lump, with ultrasound often being the first line investigation. An ultrasound scan is a painless procedure which uses sound waves to produce images and can determine whether lumps contain fluid, have a blood vessel supply or are a solid mass. An Ultrasound scan is a painless and non-invasive test that can help to locate as well as evaluate the nature of testicular lumps. However, with scrotal ultrasound scans it can be sometimes be difficult to distinguish with certainty whether certain lumps look cancerous or not.

Electrocardiogram

An electrocardiogram or ECG measures the electrical activity of the heart and the results can indicate any damage to the heart muscle or disturbance in electrical activity. An ECG cannot detect the likelihood of a heart problem, but can assess if you have had/are having a heart attack, detect abnormal heart rhythms, or cardiomyopathies (health problems affecting the heart wall). Anyone can have an ECG, it is a quick, safe and painless test.

There are 3 types of ECG – resting, exercise and ambulatory (otherwise known as a holter). Although the test is essentially the same for all three, they differ in terms of duration and whether you are expected to perform a specific activity whilst being tested. A medical professional can help guide which test would be more suitable for you.

Hearing & Eyesight Check

A hearing, or audiology appointment, is recommended to test and potentially diagnose any difficulty you have with your hearing. There are many reasons for why hearing loss or impairment occurs, and therefore, there is a multitude of tests available to assess any hearing difficulties or whether the hearing aids you may have been provided with are still suitable. It is important that you are examined before the test to ensure the ear canals are free of wax, as this can affect the result.

Eyesight, or ophthalmology appointment should, in the first instance be reviewed with your local Optician. However, if you are seeking private consultations because you are struggling with your eyesight or have eye problems, our partnering Consultant will examine your eyes with a series of tests.