

Study supports 'catch up' HPV test in older women

July 6 2023



Researchers led by Mette Tranberg develop a catch-up HPV screening test which could potentially improve cervical cancer prevention in women aged 65 years and older who have never had an HPV test. Credit: Helle Brandstrup Larsen (CC-BY 4.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

For women over the age of 65 who have never had a high-risk human

papillomavirus (HPV) test, a "catch up" HPV screening intervention may improve cervical cancer prevention by detecting more cervical pre-cancer lesions as compared to women not offered screening.

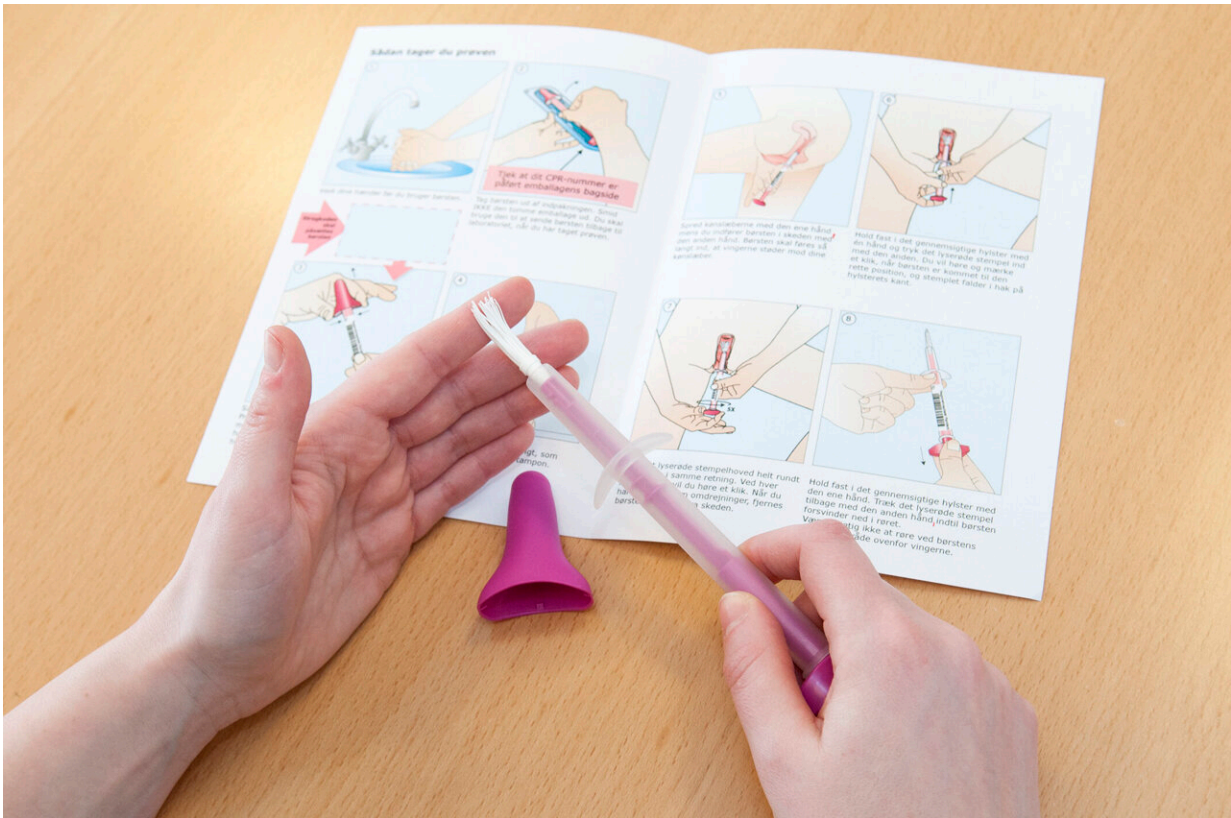
That is the conclusion of a new study published in the open access journal *PLOS Medicine* by Mette Tranberg, University Research Clinic for Cancer Screening, Randers Regional Hospital, Denmark, and colleagues.

High-risk HPV test is replacing [cytology](#) as the primary cervical [cancer screening](#) test in most countries, but many women over 65 years have never had an HPV test. Controversy remains on whether and how these women should be offered a catch-up HPV test to prevent cancer at older ages.

Denmark has a free-of-charge cervical cancer screening program aimed at women up to age 64. The new study included all 65- to 69-year-old women in Denmark who had no record of cervical cancer screening in the preceding 5.5 years and no record of an HPV test at ages 60 to 64.

A total of 11,192 eligible women residing in one region were invited to participate in HPV-based cervical cancer screening, by either booking an appointment (at the [general practitioner](#) to have a cervical cytology sample collected) or ordering a vaginal self-sampling kit. Eligible women (33,387) in the four remaining regions of Denmark were assigned to a control group where they received no screening invitation but had the opportunity to have an opportunistic cervical cytology sample collected for whatever reason.

Among all participants, rates of diagnosed [cervical intraepithelial neoplasia](#) (CIN) grade two or worse (CIN2+) were tracked for at least 13 months.



Researchers developed a self-sampling kit as a part of a cervical screening program aimed at 65- to 69-year-old women in Denmark. Credit: Helle Brandstrup Larsen (CC-BY 4.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Among women in the intervention group, 6,965 (62.2%) were screened within 12 months; among those in the control group, 743 (2.2%) had a cervical cytology collected. The rate of CIN2+ detection was 3.9 cases per 1,000 eligible women in the intervention group (95% CI 2.9,5.3, p

Citation: Study supports 'catch up' HPV test in older women (2023, July 6) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-07-hpv-older-women.html>

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