

Sexual & Reproductive Health Services

Patient information on ALO's (Actinomyces-like Organisms)

You should have received a letter from the NHS Cervical Screening Programme, on behalf of your General Practitioner informing you of your cervical screening/smear test result.

You have been sent this information leaflet because your cervical screening test was reported as showing Actinomyces-like organisms (ALOs).

The main purpose of cervical screening tests is to identify abnormal cells that might require treatment or further investigation, but smears are also able to show up other things. Many bacteria are seen in cervical screening tests; most are not mentioned in the result. Sometimes the bacteria look like Actinomyces, a bacteria that (like many others) lives and is harmless in our mouths, genital tract and digestive systems. These are reported and are called ALOs. ALOs are found quite commonly in the cervical screening tests of women who are using an intrauterine method of contraception.

This result does not mean that you actually have an infection. Among women who have ALOs on a smear it is very rare to actually have a true Actinomyces infection. If you are using an intrauterine method of contraception, you do not need this to be removed or changed and you do not need special follow-up. However, we do ask that you return should you have any of the following symptoms:

- Lower abdominal/pelvic pain
- Deep pain with sexual intercourse
- Any unusual bleeding

And finally, remember that ALOs have absolutely nothing to do with pre-cancer changes that smears are primarily meant to discover. So if your smear was otherwise normal your next smear should be carried out at the normal interval.