

# HPV

## vaccination

Protecting against HPV infection to  
help reduce your risk of cancer



# The universal HPV immunisation programme

The HPV vaccine has been offered to all girls in school year 8 since September 2008. From September 2019 the vaccine has also been offered to year 8 boys.

This is because the evidence is clear that the HPV vaccine helps protect both boys and girls from HPV-related cancers.

**More than 280 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been given worldwide, including 120 million doses in the US and over 10 million in the UK.**

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## **The HPV vaccine helps protect you from being infected by the human papillomavirus (HPV).**

This virus increases the risk of developing some cancers later in life, such as:

- cervical cancer
- some mouth and throat cancers
- some cancers of the anus and genital areas

The HPV vaccine does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections.

# HPV and how it spreads

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**HPV infection is very common.** More than 70% of unvaccinated people will get it

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70%

**HPV lives on the skin in and around the whole genital area**, so using condoms does not provide complete protection from HPV

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There are **many different types** of HPV

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Most HPV infections do not cause any symptoms and **get better on their own**

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**Some do not clear up** and can lead to cancer whilst others cause genital warts



## What difference has the HPV vaccine made so far?

Fifteen years since the start of the vaccination programme in the UK there has been a big decline in HPV infections and in the number of young people with genital warts.

In time it is expected that the vaccine will save hundreds of lives every year in the UK.

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## Having the HPV vaccine

The vaccine is given as an injection in your upper arm.

Most people will need only one dose to be protected. This is usually given around the time you are in school year 8.



**To give you the best protection, the vaccine should be given before you become sexually active.**

**If you are sexually active you should still have the vaccine.**



## The HPV vaccine

The HPV vaccine used in the **NHS vaccination schedule** is Gardasil 9 and protects against 9 of the types of HPV which can cause cancer and genital warts for most people with just one dose.

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## I missed my vaccination, can I still have it?

Yes. If you missed your vaccination at school, you should try and have it as soon as possible.

Contact your school nurse, school immunisation team or GP practice to arrange an appointment.

You remain eligible to receive the vaccine up until your 25th birthday.

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## Women who have had the vaccine will still need to go for cervical screening

All women aged 25 and over in England are offered cervical screening tests. The HPV vaccine will prevent up to 90% of cervical cancer cases, but women should still attend for cervical screening when invited to do so.



## What about the other cancers?


There are currently no screening programmes for other HPV-related cancers. If you are worried about any symptoms speak to your GP practice.

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## Side effects

As with most other vaccinations, the side effects of the HPV vaccination are quite mild. Soreness, swelling and redness in the arm are common but wear off in a couple of days. More serious side effects are extremely rare.

The vaccine has passed the strict safety standards for use in the UK and has been shown to be a very safe vaccine. Millions of doses of vaccine have already been given to boys and girls in the UK and around the world. As with all vaccines, any reports of side effects are closely monitored and reviewed.



If you experience any suspected side effects to the vaccine, you can report these on the Yellow Card website or by calling **0800 731 6789** (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

**[www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard)**

# Remember



to get your HPV vaccine now,  
to protect yourself against a  
number of cancers in the future



the vaccine is saving hundreds  
of lives every year in the UK



even with protection from the  
HPV vaccine you will still need  
health checks, such as your  
cervical smear from age 25

**For more information,  
visit [www.nhs.uk/hpv](http://www.nhs.uk/hpv)**

A complete list of ingredients for the Gardasil 9 vaccine is given in the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL): [www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/7330/pil](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/7330/pil)

The Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC): [www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/7330/smcp/print](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/7330/smcp/print)



This leaflet has been produced by the UK Health Security Agency.  
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