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Your guide to the HPV vaccine



This leaflet gives you information about the HPV vaccine offered to all girls in school year 8 to protect against cervical cancer.

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer occurs in the cervix (the entrance to the womb) which is found at the top of the vagina. Cervical cancer can be very serious. In the UK about 3,000 cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed every year, about 900 women die from it. Virtually all cases are caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV).

How is the HPV virus spread?

There are many types of HPV virus and HPV infection is very common. The types that can cause cervical cancer are spread by having intimate sexual contact with another person who already has the virus. More than half the sexually active population will get infected with HPV at some point in their lives. People are often infected without knowing it as there are usually no symptoms. In some women the virus can cause cervical cancer, so having the vaccine is very important.

What does the HPV vaccine protect against?

The vaccine protects against the HPV types that cause most cases of cervical cancer.

Girls who have the vaccination will reduce their risk of getting cervical cancer by over 70%.

The vaccine also protects against 2 types of HPV that cause most cases of genital warts. It won't protect against any other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

How is the vaccination offered?

All girls in school year 8 are routinely offered the HPV vaccine at school. You will receive information and a consent form through school. Make sure you and your parent or guardian read through the information and return the signed consent form to school as soon as possible. It's best to involve your parent or guardian, but in some circumstances you can give consent for yourself if you are fully able to understand what is being offered.

The vaccination is a course of 2 injections given in the upper arm. They are usually offered 1 year apart, however, the second dose can be given any time from 6 months to 2 years after the first dose.

To get the best protection the course must be completed.

Girls who have a weakened immune system need a course of 3 injections to ensure protection.

Are there any reasons why I should not have the HPV vaccine?

There are very few reasons why the vaccine should not be given.

You should not have the HPV vaccine if you have had a very severe, life threatening reaction to any of the vaccine contents or to a previous dose of a HPV vaccine.

If you have any other medical conditions, including a bleeding disorder where your blood doesn't clot properly or allergies, speak to the person offering you the vaccine.

What if I am ill on the day of the appointment?

If you have a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, you should have the vaccination as planned.

If you are unwell with a high temperature you should delay the vaccination until your fever has settled. Once you are well you should arrange to have the vaccination as soon as possible.

Are there any side effects?

Any side effects of the HPV vaccination are usually quite mild. You may get some redness, swelling or tenderness in your arm where you had the vaccine but this usually gets better within a day or two. Some people may feel sick or have a headache, fever, tiredness or aching muscles. More serious side effects are extremely rare.

The vaccine meets strict safety standards, and millions of doses have already been given to girls around the world.

I missed my vaccination, can I still have it?

Yes, if you are under 18 and missed any of your HPV doses you should speak to your school nurse or GP about making another appointment as soon as possible. Girls who have not had their first dose of HPV vaccine by their 15th birthday will need to have 3 doses. The second dose should be given a month after the first dose and the third dose given around 4 to 6 months after the first dose. The person giving you the vaccine will tell you when to attend for your next dose.

If you are 18 or over and have already started the course contact your GP practice.

If you miss a dose it is best to make an appointment to receive it as soon as possible.

Should girls who are already sexually active still have the vaccination?

Yes, girls who are already sexually active should have the vaccine.

When I'm older, will I still need to go for cervical screening tests?

Yes, you should still attend for cervical screening (smear tests) when you are invited. The vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause most cases of cervical cancer but not all types. That's why you still need screening, which can also detect other changes in the cervix.

Please remember that regular smear tests will still be important whether you get the HPV vaccination or not.

Why aren't boys given the HPV immunisation?

The priority is to protect girls against cervical cancer. Boys can't develop cervical cancer. By immunising girls, the level of protection against HPV will be raised because there will be fewer viruses circulating.

Where can I get more information?

You can speak to your school nurse, or phone NHS Direct Wales on **0845 4647**

Further information is available online at **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/immunisations** or use the QR code.



For more information about cervical screening visit:

www.screeningservices.org.uk/csw/

Information on consent in health care for young people is available from:

www.wales.gov.uk/immunisation

The routine immunisation schedule that shows you which immunisations are offered in Wales is available from

www.publichealthwales.org/routine-immunisation-schedule-wales.

The HPV vaccine currently given is called Gardasil®. Information on potential side effects and vaccine contents are available in the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) at **www.medicines.org.uk/emc/** or by scanning the QR code and putting the name of the vaccine in the search box.



Information on reporting suspected side effects can be found online at www.yellowcard.gov.uk or call the Yellow Card hotline on **0808 100 3352** (Monday to Friday 10:00-14:00).

Printed copies of this leaflet are available by e-mailing: hplibrary@wales.nhs.uk or telephoning **0845 606 4050**.

This leaflet is produced by: Public Health Division, Welsh Government and the Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme, Public Health Wales.

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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