



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Your guide to the
HPV vaccination

www.cymru.gov.uk

Beating 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. After breast cancer, it is the most common women's cancer in the world. In the UK, about 3,000 cases are diagnosed every year and about 1,000 women die from it. It is caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV immunisation protects from the HPV infections that cause about three quarters of cervical cancers.

How does HPV spread?

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. In some women, the virus can cause cervical cancer, so having the vaccine is very important, as we do not know who is at risk.

The HPV vaccine

There are many types of HPV, and the vaccine protects against the types that cause most cases of cervical cancer. Because the vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that cause cancer, you will still need to have cervical screening (smear tests that pick up early signs of changes in the cervix) when you are older.

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

The vaccine used from September 2012 will also protect against two types of HPV that cause most cases of genital warts. It won't protect against any other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and it won't prevent pregnancy.

Having the vaccination

All girls in school year 8 are routinely offered an appointment for the HPV vaccine, normally given at school. Three injections spread over about six months are needed to get the best protection. It's important to have all three doses. The vaccine is given in the upper arm.

If you are in school year 8 you will receive an invitation for vaccination. If you have missed this invitation and are under 18, ask your school nurse or GP practice how to get the HPV vaccine.

Are there any side effects?

Any side effects of the HPV vaccination are usually quite mild. Often there is nothing more than some soreness and swelling around the injection site that may last a few hours or up to a few days. 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.

See www.nhs.uk/vaccinations if you'd like more information on side effects.

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

Yes. All women should have cervical screening (smear tests) when they are invited for testing. 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 don't forget that regular smear tests will still be important whether you get the HPV vaccinations or not.

Why is the vaccine offered in school year 8?

Girls should ideally be vaccinated before they may come into contact with the HPV virus.

The risk of infection increases from the age of 14. Therefore giving the vaccine in school year 8 offers the best protection.

I missed my vaccination, can I still have it?

Yes. If you missed any of your vaccinations for whatever reason, and are under 18, you should speak to your school nurse or GP about making another appointment. It is best to make your appointment as soon as possible. It's important to have all three doses.

Has the vaccine changed?

Yes. From September 2012, a different HPV vaccine is being used in the UK. Those who missed out on one or two doses in a previous school year should still complete the course with the original vaccine used.

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

Yes. Girls who are already sexually active should still have the vaccine if they are under 18.



Where can I get more information?

You can speak to your school nurse at your appointment, or visit

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

for more information.

You can also phone the NHS Direct Wales HPV helpline on **0845 602 3303***

**calls cost at least 5 pence a minute from a BT landline. Calls from mobiles and other networks may cost more. You may be charged a minimum cost for each call.*

For more information about cervical screening visit:

www.screeningservices.org.uk/csw/

Copies of this leaflet are available by e-mailing: hplibrary@wales.nhs.uk

This leaflet is available on the Welsh Government immunisation website:
<http://www.wales.gov.uk/immunisation>

Questions about this leaflet can be addressed to:

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