

## Do women still need to go for cervical screening if they have had the HPV vaccine?

**Yes.** All women over the age of 25 years are offered cervical screening (a smear test). The HPV vaccine protects against the two human HPV types that cause the majority (70%) of cases of cervical cancer, so screening is necessary to try and pick up any cervical abnormalities caused by other HPV types that could still lead to cancer.

## Do condoms protect against HPV infections?

Condoms do not cover all of the genital skin area and therefore can only offer limited protection from HPV infection. Condoms do, however, offer protection from many other sexually transmitted infections and help prevent unwanted pregnancy.

**The HPV vaccine has been declared safe by the World Health Organisation and has been used in Gibraltar since 2008.**

**The HPV vaccine can prevent around 90% of cervical cancers in women and 95% of HPV-related cancers in men.**

## Please note...

HPV can affect both men and women.

Having the HPV vaccine will significantly reduce your child's risk of getting cancers of the mouth, throat, anus, cervix, vulva and vagina or penis.

Having the HPV vaccine will also protect them against most cases of genital warts.

The HPV vaccination will not protect against sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and will not prevent girls getting pregnant.

For women, cervical screening (smear test) is still important whether or not they have had the HPV vaccination.

Further information may be obtained from the Child Welfare and Immunisation Clinic at the Children's Health Centre on weekdays between 08:30 and 16:30 hours.  
**Telephone: 20070143 ext. 3244**

# HPV Vaccine Guide



**The HPV vaccine helps to protect against HPV virus infections that can lead to cancer and other diseases.**

## **What is HPV?**

HPV stands for Human Papilloma Virus. The human papillomavirus is very common and can affect both men and women.

Genital HPV infection is a common sexually transmitted infection. It usually causes no symptoms and goes away by itself, but can sometimes cause serious illness.

HPV-related cancers and diseases include:

- Cancers of the cervix, vulva and vagina in women
- Cancers of the anus, mouth and throat in both men and women
- Cancer of the penis in men
- Genital warts in both men and women

## **How does HPV spread?**

HPV is passed on from person to person through intimate genital-skin contact; the virus enters the body through tiny breaks in the skin. A person can be exposed to HPV the first time sexual activity takes place, from only one sexual partner. Most people will be exposed to it at some time during their lifetime.

## **How can HPV infections be prevented?**

The HPV vaccination offers protection against several types of human papillomavirus, including the two types that cause over 70% of cases of cervical cancer as well as other HPV infections.

The HPV vaccine is used in 84 countries worldwide and more than 80 million people have received the vaccination to date. The HPV vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 12-18 years.

## **Why is it so important for younger people to have the HPV vaccine?**

The vaccine works best if given before any sexual activity begins and provides better protection against HPV in the future.

## **If my child is already sexually active do they still need the vaccine?**

Definitely. If they are sexually active it is still advisable to have the vaccination in case they have not been infected by the virus.

## **Having the vaccine**

The HPV vaccine is administered into the upper arm by a qualified nurse. The first dose is given to students in school year 8.

The second dose is generally offered 6-12 months after the first but can be given up to 24 months after.

It is important that a child receives both doses to be protected. The Health Visitor or Nurse will inform your child when they are due to have their second dose.

## **Consenting to have the vaccine**

If the HPV vaccine is being offered at school, you (the parent/guardian) will be given a form to sign agreeing that your child may receive the vaccine. Information about the vaccination will be added to their GHA records.

## **How many doses of the vaccine are needed?**

Research shows that two doses of the vaccine given 6-12 months apart will provide long-lasting protection for people aged 14 and under. It is important to have both doses to be fully protected.

## **What happens if the child misses the vaccination?**

If the child misses either of the vaccinations, you should contact their GP or nurse about making an appointment to have it as soon as possible. Remember, it is important to have both doses of the vaccine.

## **What happens if my child is over 15 years old and has not had the HPV vaccine?**

If the child has not had any HPV vaccines by the age of 15 years, he or she will need three doses to have full protection, instead of the routine two doses – in this case, the second dose will be given about a month after the first dose; and a final dose will be given approximately six months after the first dose.

## **Does the vaccine have any side-effects?**

The HPV vaccine has been shown to be a very safe vaccine. Like most vaccines, the side effects of the HPV vaccine are quite mild and may include soreness, swelling or redness of the arm that wears off in a couple of days. More serious side effects are rare. Nonetheless, reports of any side effects are closely monitored and reviewed.