

Frequently asked questions about the HPV vaccination

I've heard you get a sore, swollen arm for a long time after the vaccination. Is that true?

The soreness and swelling you may get in your arm can last for a few hours, to a couple of days.

I missed my vaccination, can I still have it?

Yes. If you missed any of your vaccinations, for whatever reason, you should speak to your nurse or doctor about making another appointment. It's best to make your appointment as soon as possible after your original one. The most important thing is to have all three doses – it's never too late to catch up.

Now I've had the injections, will I still need to go for smear tests?

Yes. All women should go for smear tests (cervical screening) as soon as they are old enough (25 and over in England). The vaccine protects against 70% of the human papillomavirus types that cause cervical cancer, so you still have to be screened to try to pick up cervical abnormalities caused by other HPV types that could lead to cancer.

Should girls who have already had sex bother with the vaccination?

Definitely. If you've had sex, and are in the relevant age group, you should still have the vaccine.

Missed your appointment?

Speak to your nurse to arrange another one. It is important that you have all three doses to get the best protection.

Please don't forget that smear tests (cervical screening) will continue to be essential whether you have had the HPV vaccination or not.

More information

Visit www.nhs.uk/vaccinations where you can download a question-and-answer sheet that gives more detailed information on the topics covered in this leaflet.

For more information about cervical screening visit www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk

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**Your
guide to the
HPV vaccination**

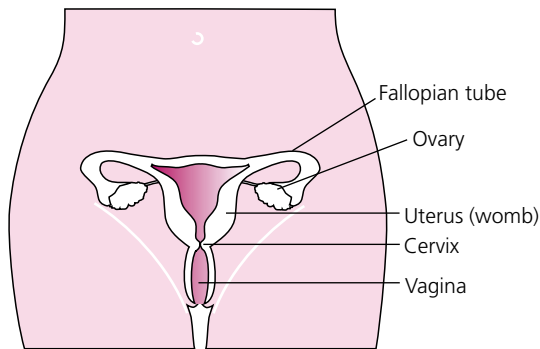
Beating cervical cancer

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer develops in the cervix (the entrance to the womb – see diagram below). It is caused by a virus called the **human papillomavirus or HPV**.

Cervical cancer can be very serious. After breast cancer, it is the most common women's cancer in the world. In the UK, around 3000 cases of it are diagnosed every year and about 1000 women die from it.

For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/vaccinations



HPV and how it spreads

The human papillomavirus is very common and you catch it through intimate sexual contact with another person who already has it. Because it is so common, most people will get infected at some point in their lifetime. In most women the virus does not cause cervical cancer. But having the vaccine is important because we do not know who is at risk.

The HPV (cervical cancer) vaccine

There are many types of human papillomavirus. The HPV vaccine protects against the two types that cause most cases (over 70%) of cervical cancer.

Because the vaccine does not protect you against all of the other types, you will still need to have smear tests (cervical screening that picks 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 70%.

Having the vaccination

You will need three injections over about six months to get the best protection. It's important that you have all three doses. The nurse will give you the vaccination in your upper arm.

Your school or local NHS will contact you when it is time for your vaccination.

Remember, the HPV vaccine is recommended for all girls in school year 8 (aged 12 to 13), and all girls born on or after 1 September 1990 in a catch-up programme.

Having the vaccine won't protect you against any other sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and it won't stop you getting pregnant.

Side effects

Like most injections, the side effects of the HPV vaccination are quite mild. Stinging and soreness in the arm are common but wear off in a couple of days. More serious side effects are extremely rare and the nurses know how to deal with them. The vaccine meets the rigorous safety standards required for it to be used in the UK and other European countries.

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

Millions of doses of vaccine have already been given to girls in the UK.

Giving consent

You will probably want to share information about the vaccine with your parents and discuss it together. If you are being offered the vaccination at school, you may be given a consent form that your parent/guardian should sign giving permission for you to have the vaccination.

The doctor or nurse will discuss the HPV vaccine with you at your appointment and will be able to answer any questions you may have.