

# HPV vaccination. The facts.

## Facts about the HPV vaccine

1. It protects you against some cervical cancers and most genital warts caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).
2. If you are aged between 11 and 17, you will be offered or can have the vaccine for free.
3. You can talk with your parent or guardian and decide if you want the vaccine.
4. Even if you have had the vaccine, it is important to attend cervical screening (sometimes called a smear test) when you are 25.

## What is cervical cancer?

1. A cancer that affects the cells of the cervix (neck of the womb). It only affects women.
2. The most common cancer in women under the age of 35 in the UK.
3. Almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by HPV.

There are different types of HPV. Some can cause conditions that are not nice but won't harm you, like genital warts. Others can cause different types of cancer, like cervical cancer in women.

## How can I protect myself from cervical cancer?

1. Have the HPV vaccine, which protects you for at least 10 years against:
  - HPV 16 and 18, which cause some cervical cancers (70%)
  - HPV 6 and 11, which cause most genital warts (90%).
2. Lead a healthy lifestyle. This helps strengthen your body's natural defences (immune system).
3. Not smoking. Smoking increases your risk of developing cervical cancer.

## Who can get the vaccine?

- The vaccine is free to all girls aged between 11 and 17.
- In schools, the vaccine is offered to girls between the ages of 11 to 13. If you miss having it in school, you can get it from your GP until you are 18.
- You will have two doses of the vaccine. The doses will be six months to one year apart.

## Is it safe?

The HPV vaccine has been studied a lot and it is very safe. After having the vaccine, you may:

- feel faint
- have some redness, bruising, itching, swelling or a mild pain in the arm where you had the vaccine
- get a headache or feel a bit sick.

These side effects shouldn't last for a long time. If they last for more than a week or if you have other side effects, ask your GP about them.

## Cervical screening

- Women aged between 25 and 64 are invited for cervical screening.
- Cervical screening checks that the cervix is healthy and there are no abnormal cells caused by an HPV infection.
- It is a very important test, even if you have had the HPV vaccine.

This leaflet has been produced by:

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**Any questions?  
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The information included in this publication was correct at the time of going to press. We plan to review publications after two years. However, updates may happen more often. For updates or for the latest information, visit [jostrust.org.uk](http://jostrust.org.uk)

