



About this information

The HPV vaccine is offered to girls and boys in school. In this information, we talk about:

- the different types of HPV vaccine
- who is eligible for the HPV vaccine
- how the HPV vaccine works.

What is the HPV vaccine?

Gardasil is the HPV vaccine used by the NHS as part of its school vaccination programme.

Other HPV vaccines licensed in the UK are Cervarix and Gardasil 9. These are not offered in schools, but are available privately.

What does the HPV vaccine do?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that most people will get, but the immune system usually get rid of it without any problems. However, if HPV stays in the body, it can cause some cancers and other conditions.

The HPV vaccine Gardasil protects against HPV types 16 and 18, which are are linked to:

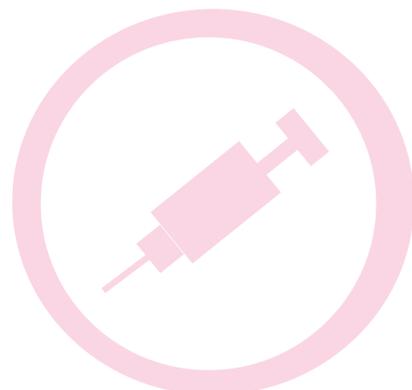
- 7 in 10 cervical cancers
- some cancers of the genital area, such as the anus, penis and vagina
- some mouth and throat cancers

Gardasil also protects against HPV types 6 and 11, which are linked to:

- 9 in 10 genital warts.

Having the HPV vaccine means it is less likely you will develop these HPV-related cancers and other conditions.

Read more about HPV at jostrust.org.uk/HPV



Who can have the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is available to most people, but it is only offered free to people of a certain age or in certain situations.

Who can have the HPV vaccine in school?

In the past, the HPV vaccine was only available to girls. Since September 2019, it has been offered free in schools to girls and boys:

- aged 11 to 12 in Scotland
- aged 12 to 13 in the rest of the UK.

If you missed having the HPV vaccine in school

If you were offered the HPV vaccine but missed having it in school, you can have it free up to age 25. This applies to:

- girls who were in year 8 (England and Wales), S1 (Scotland), or year 9 (Northern Ireland) in September 2008.
- boys who were in year 8 (England and Wales), S1 (Scotland), or year 9 (Northern Ireland) in September 2019.

Your practice nurse or GP is the best person to speak with about having the vaccine.

HPV vaccine for people over 25

There are different ways to have the HPV vaccine if you are 25 or over, depending on your individual situation.

Paying to have the HPV vaccine

You may choose to have the HPV vaccine privately. The Gardasil, Cervarix and Gardasil 9 vaccines are sometimes available from travel clinics, local pharmacies and other health centres. Each injection usually costs about £150.

You may be able to have the vaccine privately at your GP, but some surgeries will charge an extra administration fee. Check the full cost before you book an appointment.

Different places may only offer the HPV vaccine to people up to a certain age. For example, some pharmacies only offer it to people up to age 45. Check if there is an age limit wherever you want to book an appointment.

Other eligible groups

You may be able to have the HPV vaccine for free if you are a man who has sex with men, a transgender person, someone who is HIV positive, or a sex worker. Speak with your healthcare professional if you think you are eligible.

Who shouldn't have the HPV vaccine?

You should not have the HPV vaccine if:

- you had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the HPV vaccine
- you are pregnant.

Having the HPV vaccine

Like most injections (jabs or jags), the HPV vaccine is injected into your upper arm.

If you are under 15 years old

If you are under 15 years old, you will have 2 injections. Once you have had the first injection, you have the second injection usually 6 to 12 months after.

If you are age 15 or over

If you are 15 or over, you will have 3 injections. This is to make sure the vaccine works as well as possible.

Once you have had the first injection, you have the second injection 2 months after. Then you have the third injection 4 months later. In total, it will take 6 months to have all the injections.

HPV vaccine side effects

The HPV vaccine is very safe. If any side effects are reported, they are usually common ones that may happen shortly after any injection.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for making sure that vaccines are safe, which includes collecting and reporting on information from healthcare professionals and people who have had the vaccine.

Common side effects

After the HPV vaccine, more than 1 in 10 people have:

- redness, swelling or pain at the injection site – this should get better after a few days
- a headache, but it should not last long.

More than 1 in 100 (but less than 1 in 10) people have:

- bruising or itching at the injection site
- a high temperature or feeling hot and shivery (fever)
- sickness (nausea)
- painful arms, hands, fingers, legs feet or toes.

Rare side effects

After the HPV vaccine, very few people have more serious side effects, such as an itchy red rash (hives) or difficulty breathing. Some people may feel dizzy or faint – it can help to sit or lie down for 15 minutes after having the injection.

Most side effects are the type reported shortly after any vaccination. If you feel very ill, it is important to speak with a doctor straight away.

How long does the HPV vaccine work for?

We know the HPV vaccine prevents infection for at least 10 years, but modelling suggests it will last longer. Ongoing studies will show how much longer people will be protected for.

The HPV vaccine and cross-protection

There is some evidence that the HPV vaccine provides cross-protection against other types of HPV. Cross-protection means it protects against HPV types that are not included in the vaccine, meaning it may offer even more protection than first thought.

Research also shows the HPV vaccine could prevent two thirds of cervical cancers in women younger than 30 by 2025. But this will only happen if at least 8 in 10 people have the HPV vaccine when offered.

Do I need to go for cervical screening if I have had the HPV vaccine?

Although the HPV vaccine protects against 7 out of 10 cases of cervical cancer, you may get other types of high-risk HPV. Going for cervical screening (a smear test) when invited can help find a high-risk HPV infection or changes to cells (abnormal cells) early, before they develop.

More information and support

We hope this information has helped you feel prepared for colposcopy or explained more about your results. If you have general questions or want to talk through your experience, we are here for you.

For emotional support, call our free Helpline on **0808 802 8000** – check the opening hours at jostrust.org.uk/helpline

If you have a question, you can ask our experts at jostrust.org.uk/ask-expert We cannot give you medical advice or answers about any results. In this case, it is best to speak with your GP or nurse.

If you would find it reassuring to talk with others who have been to colposcopy or had cell changes, join our online forum at jostrust.org.uk/forum

Can you help Jo's reach more people?

We rely on your generous donations to help us provide free support and information to the people who need it. If you find this information helpful, please consider making a donation at jostrust.org.uk/donate

Thanks and references

Thank you to everyone affected by cervical cancer who helped us develop this booklet and who shared their stories in it.

All of our information is reviewed by experts for clinical accuracy – thanks to those who reviewed this. For references, email info@jostrust.org.uk

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