



Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination

FACTSHEET FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The HPV vaccine is not new

The HPV vaccine has been used in the UK since 2008 and more than 10 million doses have been given. More than 80 million people have been vaccinated worldwide.

Most young people are being vaccinated

Nearly 90% of parents choose to accept the HPV vaccine for their child. Most women aged 15 to 24 years in England have now been given the vaccine and we anticipate that from 2019 most boys will be given the vaccine too.

Girls and boys should have the vaccine at the recommended ages

Vaccination at a younger age is more effective at preventing HPV infection. So the best time to be vaccinated is between 12 and 14 years.

Safe sex wont provide enough protection

HPV can spread by any sexual contact. Condoms do not completely prevent the risk of infection

HPV vaccine works

In England, we have already seen a significant decrease in infections with the two main HPV types that can cause cancer (types 16 and 18).

Scottish researchers have also shown a decline – probably due to cross-protection – in three other HPV types linked to cancer (types 31, 33 and 45).

The number of precancerous lesions in the cervix has already fallen by over 50% since the programme began in Australia, Denmark and Scotland.

Are people reporting more side effects than expected after HPV?

To date, the number of reports to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) of suspected side effects for HPV vaccines is not unusual. The overwhelming majority relate to mild conditions commonly seen when you vaccinate teenagers (e.g. injection site reactions, rashes, mild allergic events, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, immediate faints due to needle phobia, etc.)

The UK programme has already contributed to preventing future deaths from cancer. We expect it to eventually prevent hundreds of cancer deaths every year.



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The vaccine does not cause chronic fatigue syndrome

Current evidence does not support any association between HPV vaccine and chronic fatigue. In 2013, the MHRA conducted a large study in the UK which showed no link between HPV vaccine and illnesses such as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and fibromyalgia.

Since then, population-based studies in Finland, Norway and The Netherlands have similarly found no evidence of an association. CFS does occur naturally in adolescence, and the evidence from these studies, and more than 10 years of use, would suggest that reports of CFS following HPV vaccine are coincidental.

Has there been any research into a link between vaccine and chronic illness?

Over the 10 years that HPV vaccine has been in use in the UK and around the world, more than thirty population-based studies and reviews have been published, and independent safety studies continue to be published. None of these studies have found any evidence to suggest that HPV vaccine is associated with the development of a wide range of serious and chronic illnesses.

Aside from thorough reviews by UK health authorities, several international authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention in the USA, the World Health Organization, and the European Medicines Agency have looked carefully at the evidence and concluded that there is currently no credible evidence of a link between HPV vaccine and a range of chronic illnesses.

As with all vaccines, the safety of HPV vaccine will remain under close and continual review.

The product insert mentions a number of serious and chronic conditions. Does that mean that the vaccine causes these conditions?

Although the US package insert lists a range of reported illnesses – these are included regardless of any established link with the vaccine. The EU product insert also mentions some conditions reported in temporal association with vaccination but for which a causal association has not been established.

An example is the inclusion of the nerve disorder Guillain Barre Syndrome, for which several epidemiological studies have found no evidence of a causal link to the vaccine.

Extensive reviews of vaccine safety have concluded that evidence does not support a link between HPV vaccine and the development of a range of chronic illnesses.

Further information

<http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation#human-papillomavirus-hpv>

NHS choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/hpv-human-papillomavirus-vaccine.aspx>

The human papillomavirus vaccine: beating cervical cancer – the facts

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-human-papillomavirus-vaccine-beating-cervical-cancer-the-facts>

The HPV vaccine: beating cervical cancer – questions and answers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-hpv-vaccine-beating-cervical-cancer-questions-and-answers>

Jo's Trust

<https://www.jostrust.org.uk/about-cervical-cancer>

References

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- 4: Klein NP et al. Safety of quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine administered routinely to females. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 2012 Dec;166(12):1140-8.
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