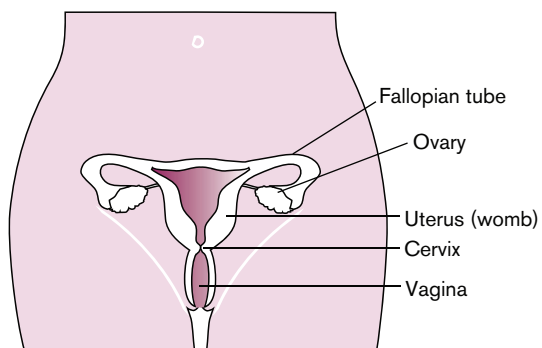


The essential guide to the HPV vaccination

This leaflet is about the new vaccination (injection) that you can have now to protect yourself against cervical cancer when you get older. If you want more information, check out www.helpprotectyourself.info

Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer occurs 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 and around 1,000 women die from it in the UK each year.



HPV and how it spreads

There are over 100 types of human papillomavirus but only 13 of them are known to cause cancer.

The virus is very common and you can catch it by being sexually active with another person who already has the virus.

Most people will be infected with HPV at some point in their lives without knowing it, as there are usually no symptoms. Most of the time, the virus does not cause cancer because it is killed off by the body's immune system, but not always – this is why the vaccine is so important.

The HPV vaccine

The vaccine protects against the two types of the virus that cause most (over 70%) of the cases of cervical cancer. It does not protect you against all of the other types of HPV, so you will still need to have cervical screening (smear tests) when you are older.

By having the vaccination you will reduce your risk of getting cervical cancer by over 70%.

When should I have the vaccination?

You need to have the vaccination before you start being sexually active. It is recommended that you have the vaccination at 12 to 13 years of age to protect you as early as possible therefore the vaccination will be routinely given to Year 9 girls in school. However the vaccine will also be offered to older girls up to the age of 18. This will begin in September 2008 with the vaccination of 17 to 18 year old girls born between 2 July 1990 and 1 July 1991 in GP practices.

Having the vaccine won't protect you against other sexually transmitted infections and it won't stop you getting pregnant.

Having the vaccination

You will need three injections within 12 months to get the best protection. Like the vaccinations you had as a baby, it is important that you complete the course and have all three doses for it to work properly.

The vaccination will be given in your upper arm.

If you suffer from asthma, eczema, hay fever or other allergies, you can still have the vaccine. If you have any concerns about this, speak to the nurse.

Side effects

The side effects of the vaccination are quite mild – usually just stinging or soreness in the arm, which soon wears off. The vaccine meets the rigorous safety standards required for it to be used in the UK and other European countries.

Very rarely, some people have a reaction soon after the injection, like a rash. The nurse will know how to treat this. It is not a reason not to have more injections for HPV or other diseases.

Severe allergic reactions are very rare and nurses are trained to deal with them. People recover completely with treatment, usually within a few hours.

Giving consent

As with other forms of healthcare you will be asked for your consent before the vaccine is given. Girls over 16 years of age are presumed to be capable of self-consenting unless there are specific reasons otherwise.

More information

More detailed information on the topics covered in this leaflet can be downloaded from our website www.helpprotectyourself.info

To get this leaflet in another language visit our website or ask your GP practice to print you a copy.



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Beating cervical cancer

Information for girls aged 17-18



Help protect yourself

All you need to know about the
new HPV vaccine that protects
against the commonest cause
of cervical cancer