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# HPV vaccination

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## Introduction

### Video: HPV vaccination



A GP and a group of teenage girls explain how the HPV vaccine can reduce the risk of getting cervical cancer.

### Cervical screening

[Cervical screening](#) is a method of identifying abnormal cells in the cervix (neck of the womb). Early detection and treatment can prevent three-quarters of cancers developing.

According to [Cancer Research UK](#), cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women who are under the age of 35. In the UK, 2,900 women a year are diagnosed with cervical cancer.

Regular cervical screening is the best way to identify abnormal cell changes in the cervix. Following the introduction of the national HPV vaccination programme in 2008, the NHS cervical screening programme will continue to play an important part in checking women between the ages of 25 and 64 for early-stage cell changes.

Since September 2008 there has been a national programme to vaccinate girls aged 12 to 13 against the human papilloma virus (HPV). This age-group is usually in year 8 at schools in England.

From September 2008 a three-year "catch-up" campaign was started, to offer the HPV vaccine, also known as the cervical cancer jab, to older girls aged 14–17. Most primary care trusts are aiming to complete the catch-up programme within two years.

The programme is delivered largely through secondary schools and consists of three injections that should ideally be given over a period of six months, although they can all be given over a period of 12 months.

In the UK, from September 2008 to July 2010, at least four million doses of Cervarix (the HPV vaccine used in the UK programme) were given.

### Human papilloma virus (HPV)

The human papilloma virus (HPV) is the name given to a family of viruses that affect the skin and the moist membranes (mucosa) that line the body. Mucosa are found in the:

- mouth
- throat
- cervix (the neck of the womb)
- anus

There are over 100 different types of HPV, with around 40 types affecting the genital area. These are classed as high-risk and low-risk depending on the type of conditions that they can cause (see [HPV vaccination – Why it is needed](#) for more information).

## Different types of HPV

Infection with some high-risk types of HPV can cause abnormal tissue growth as well as other cell changes that can lead to cervical cancer (cancer of the cervix).

Infection with other types of HPV may cause:

- genital warts: small growths or skin changes on or around the genital or anal area. These are the most common viral sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the UK.
- skin warts and verrucas
- vaginal cancer or vulval cancer (although these types of cancer are rare)
- anal cancer or cancer of the penis
- some cancers of the head and neck
- laryngeal papillomas (warts on the voice box or vocal cords)

Some types of HPV are transmitted through sexual contact, which can cause genital warts and cervical cancer.

Combined with cervical screening (see box to the left), the HPV vaccination is an important step towards preventing cervical cancer. It is estimated that about 400 lives could be saved in the UK every year as a result of vaccinating girls before they are infected with HPV.

