

Click this link to go to the web page:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/advice/factfile_az/hpv_vaccine

The screenshot shows the BBC Advice website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a 'Sign in' link, and links for 'News', 'Sport', 'Weather', 'iPlayer', and 'TV'. Below this is the 'Advice' header with the tagline 'Helping you get through life'. To the right of the header, it says 'Brought to you by' followed by logos for 'BBC switch', 'BBC RADIO 1', and 'BBC RADIO 1 Xtra'. A navigation menu below the header includes 'Home', 'Factfile A-Z', 'Helplines', 'Hide my tracks', and 'Hide this'. A breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Your Body > Girls' Bodies > Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine'. The main content area features a large image of a pink rose with a green banner at the bottom that reads 'Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine'. Below the image, the text states: 'HPV stands for human papillomavirus and it causes 99% of all cases of cervical cancer. Here's the lowdown on a new vaccine that's looking to reduce the number of cervical cancer cases caused by HPV.' There are three sub-sections: 'What is it?' which explains the vaccine is for girls aged 12-13 in the UK; 'Why do I need it?' which states it helps protect against cervical cancer. To the right of the main text is a 'Latest user comment' section showing a removed comment by Leslie Carol Botha on 28/07/2010. Below this is a '0% found this factfile useful' statistic and a 'Did you find this factfile useful?' poll with 'Yes' and 'No' buttons.

What causes cancer?

Cancer of the cervix is caused by a virus, called HPV. HPV is sexually transmitted and is very common. By the time we are 50, about 80% of us will have HPV.

But 80% of women don't get this cancer, do they?

No. That's because there are about 100 types of HPV. Most cause no trouble at all, only a few cause cancer.

So how does the vaccine help?

Once vaccinated, we are immune from the two most serious types of HPV. These two types cause 70% of all cancer of the cervix. So we are much less likely to get cancer when we're older.

How do I get the vaccine? I don't want a needle in my bum...

The injection goes in your upper arm. It will probably be done at school. You need three injections, spaced out over six months, to be fully protected.

I'm over 13, what about me?

It's planned that all girls aged 13-18 will be offered the vaccine by 2011. The vaccine is proven to be effective in women up to 25 and studies in women aged 25-55 are still happening.

So will it stop me getting cancer?

No. It just makes cancer of the cervix less likely. We still need to have smear tests when we're older, as it is not complete protection against cancer of the cervix. And other cancers are not affected at all.

Will the vaccine stop any other STIs?

Nope, it won't. Not a single one. Safe sex is still a must.

What about warts?

Good question. Some types of HPV cause genital warts. These HPV types do not cause cancer. Unfortunately, the vaccine won't protect you from these. So warts are still possible.

Can't I just always use condoms and be safe that way?

Condoms are a great idea. They are the best protection we have against STIs. But HPV can be passed on even if we use a condom. So the vaccine is still necessary.

Can I say no if I don't want the injection?

Yes, it is not compulsory. Your parents must sign a consent form so discuss it with them.

Will it stop me getting pregnant?

No. It won't affect your chances of getting pregnant at all. So you will still need to use contraception until you want a baby.

My friend says it makes hairs grow inside your body...

Blimey! Your friend has been watching too many dodgy movies. It will not do this and it won't make you put on weight. It may be a bit sore around the place where the needle went in. Sometimes people get a fever after the injection or feel sick. But most of us get no side effects at all.

Why HPV is important



Slink's Aiss finds out why you should be getting the vaccine.