

# The HPV vaccine protects us from **cervical** **cancer**

INFORMATION  
FOR PARENTS AND  
GUARDIANS.





The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine protects girls against cervical cancer when they are adults. This leaflet is designed to answer some common questions about the vaccine. Please read it and then fill in the enclosed consent form.

### What is cervical cancer?

It is cancer of a woman's cervix, the entrance to the womb. Each year in Ireland, about 300 women get cervical cancer, and 100 women die from it. Cervical cancer is caused by HPV.

### What is HPV?

HPV stands for human papillomavirus, which is a group of over 100 viruses. Most people will get a HPV infection during their lifetime, from sexual activity. Most of these infections do not need treatment, but they can cause genital warts. In some women, however, HPV causes changes in the cervix that can develop into cervical cancer.

### What vaccine is given in the school programme to protect against HPV?

A vaccine called Gardasil protects against the types of HPV that cause 7 out of 10 cervical cancers. It also protects against genital warts.

### How does the HPV vaccine work?

The vaccine works in the same way as other common vaccines. It is given as an injection in the upper arm. The body reacts by making antibodies that will help the immune system fight HPV infection. The vaccine cannot cause HPV infection or cancer.

### Who is being offered the vaccine?

All girls in 1st year in second level schools will be offered the HPV vaccine.





Most girls will be vaccinated at school by HSE immunisation teams. Some will be invited to attend a HSE clinic to get the vaccine. You cannot get this vaccine from your GP as part of the school programme.

### **Why is this age group being vaccinated?**

We are offering the vaccine to this age group so that girls are protected before adulthood and likely exposure to HPV.

### **How many doses are needed?**

Two doses of the vaccine are needed to give full protection. The two doses are given over 6 to 12 months.

### **Can I get the vaccine when my daughter is older?**

The HSE school programme can only offer HPV vaccine to your daughter when she is in first year of second level school.

If you wish to delay vaccination you will need to pay for the vaccine and the administration of the vaccine privately.

### **Has the vaccine schedule changed?**

Yes. Until 2015 all girls needed three doses of the vaccine to give full protection. We now know that two doses give as much protection as three doses to young girls.

Girls aged 15 and older still need three doses as they do not respond as well to two doses.

We expect the vaccine to provide long-lasting protection, but we will let you know if a booster is needed in the future.

### **Who should not receive HPV vaccine?**

Girls should not receive the vaccine if they:

- have had a very severe reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous HPV vaccine (Gardasil) or any part of the vaccine; or
- are pregnant

Please let us know if your daughter has an illness or condition that increases her risk of bleeding.

You should delay getting the HPV vaccine if your daughter is ill with a high fever.

**We are offering the vaccine to this age group so that they are protected before adulthood and likely exposure to HPV.**

**This vaccine has been shown to be very safe, with 178 million doses already distributed worldwide.**



### **Does the vaccine have any side effects?**

Occasionally girls faint after getting an injection. The girls are advised to sit down for fifteen minutes after the vaccination. This helps prevent fainting.

There may be some mild side effects, including:

- pain, redness or swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given
  - headache
  - dizziness
  - nausea
- and/or
- a mild fever.

These can be treated with paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Rarer side effects include an itchy rash or hives. Like most vaccines, severe allergic reactions are extremely rare. As usual, seek medical advice if you are concerned.

Before the next dose of your vaccine you should tell the vaccination team if there has been a serious reaction to a previous dose of vaccine or if there has been any change to your daughter's medical history.

*You can read more about the vaccine and its ingredients on our website [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)*


### **Can HPV vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?**

The HPV vaccine can be given at the same time as other vaccines such as Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough/pertussis vaccine) and MenC (meningococcal vaccine). If you give consent for these vaccines the girl will receive one vaccine in each arm at each visit.

### **What happens if a girl misses a dose of the vaccine?**

She can still get the vaccine. The HSE will arrange for her to be immunised at a HSE clinic.





## What should I do next?

Please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to your daughter's school. If you are giving consent, it is for **two** doses of HPV vaccine.

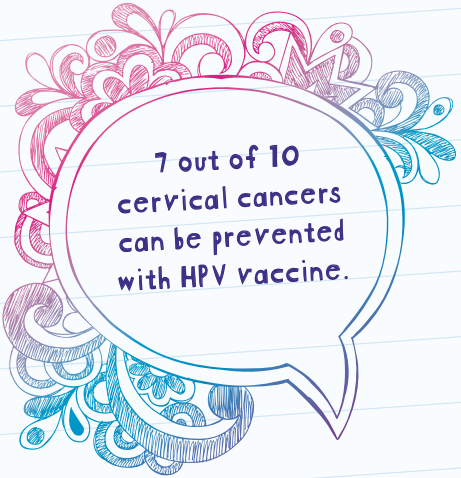
If you wish to withdraw your consent for the second dose of vaccine, you should write to the vaccination team.

## Will I get a record of HPV vaccinations?

Girls will receive an immunisation passport with details of their HPV vaccinations.

## What happens to a girl's vaccination record in the HSE?

The HSE will use the information you provide to link your daughter's HPV vaccine details with her other immunisation records. We will know what vaccines she has had and can call her back if a booster is needed. We will also share her details with CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme so that they can be linked to her future cervical cancer screening record. We will keep this data absolutely confidential.



**7 out of 10  
cervical cancers  
can be prevented  
with HPV vaccine.**

## How can girls be protected from all cervical cancer as adults?

The vaccine protects against 7 out of 10 cervical cancers, so it is **still important for girls to have regular smear tests when they are adults.** This is why we will share her vaccination details with CervicalCheck – The National Cervical Screening Programme.

**You can read more about free cervical cancer screening for adults on [www.cervicalcheck.ie](http://www.cervicalcheck.ie)**



You can read more about  
HPV, the HPV vaccine and  
cervical cancer on  
[www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)

The HPV vaccine leaflet is available  
on [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie) in:

- Arabic
- French
- Simplified Chinese
- Polish
- German
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Russian



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I'm protected **now** for the **future**

