



Vaccination to protect against HPV

Information for parents and people eligible for catch-up HPV vaccination





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About the HPV catch-up vaccination programme

A catch-up HPV vaccination programme is now available for students who were previously offered the HPV vaccine but did not receive it.

Through the schools vaccination programme, students (both male and female) can now get the HPV vaccine free of charge if they missed it previously.

This once-off opportunity ensures students have another chance to get protected against HPV-related cancers.

The HPV catch-up programme will be offered in stages. Parents or guardians of eligible students will be contacted directly when it is their child's turn to receive the vaccine.

The HPV vaccine

A vaccine is a substance that gives immunity (protection) to a particular disease. The HPV vaccine protects against the HPV virus which can cause cancer.

About this leaflet

This leaflet is for parents, students, and those eligible to receive the HPV catch-up vaccination. We hope that parents and students read it together. The HSE vaccination teams will be offering catch-up HPV vaccines to:

- All people who have been offered HPV vaccination in school before and did not get vaccinated.

People eligible for HPV vaccine will be offered:

One vaccine dose

If they have a healthy immune system or

Three vaccine doses

If they are immunocompromised (have a weak immune system).

If your child is 15 years old or younger we need parents and guardians to read this information and consent to show that they agree to their child getting this vaccine.

People who are 16 years old or older can consent for themselves. If you are aged between 16 and 19 years old, please read this information.

This leaflet tells you about:

- the HPV vaccine – what it protects against and the doses needed
- the vaccination team's visits
- common questions
- where you can find out more
- consent

If you have a question about any part of this leaflet, please contact a member of the vaccination team. You will find contact details on www.hpv.ie.

HPV vaccine – more information

What is HPV?

HPV stands for 'human papillomavirus', which is a group of more than 100 viruses. The HPV virus is very common; most people will be infected with a form of HPV in their lifetime. You can catch the HPV virus by being sexually active with another person who already has the virus. Most HPV infections do not need treatment. However, in some people, the HPV infection can persist and cause cancer. HPV also causes genital warts.

The HPV vaccine protects against cervical cancer and other cancers. The HPV vaccine is called Gardasil 9.

Infection is very common in both women and men; more than 80% of people will get an HPV infection in their lifetime.

Why is HPV vaccine given?

The HPV vaccine has been offered to girls in first year in secondary school since 2010. Since September 2019, boys have also been offered the HPV vaccine. The more young people vaccinated – both boys and girls – the better the spread of the infection can be controlled.

Which countries give HPV vaccine?

Over 140 countries and territories now give HPV vaccine as part of their national immunisation schedule, with more than 70 of these countries giving the vaccine to boys and girls. These countries include:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- Norway
- UK
- US

3 in every 4 countries worldwide give HPV vaccine to prevent cancers.

There is more information about the success of these programmes on www.hpv.ie

What cancers can HPV cause?

HPV can cause a range of pre-cancerous lesions - abnormal cells - in both men and women. Almost 10 out of 10 cervical cancers are caused by HPV.

High risk types of HPV also cause about:

- 5 out of 10 cancers of the vulva
- 6 out of 10 cancers of the mouth and throat (oropharyngeal cancers)
- almost 7 out of 10 cancers of the vagina
- 9 out of 10 cancers of the anus
- almost 4 out of 10 cancers of the penis.

How many doses of the HPV vaccine are needed?

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommended that only one dose of HPV vaccine is needed for most people through the school vaccination programme.

- For people who have a significantly weak immune system, 3 doses of HPV vaccine are recommended. This needs to be discussed with the young person's specialist.

Over 590,000 students in Ireland and 100 million people worldwide have received HPV vaccine.

HPV causes 1 in 20 cancers worldwide.

Common Questions

Can students decide to wait and get the HPV vaccine later as part of this catch up vaccination programme?

No. The HSE HPV catch-up vaccination programme is a once only opportunity for people who did not get the HPV vaccine when it was offered to them previously.

These students will not be offered later catch-up HPV vaccination.

If you choose to wait until your child is older to get vaccinated, you will need to get them vaccinated through your GP (family doctor) and you will have to pay both an administration fee and for the vaccines.

Is there a deadline on this offer?

Yes. This offer will only be available until the end of the academic year.

Will I get a record of the vaccines given?

Yes. On the day of vaccination, immunisation passports will be updated by the school vaccination team. If you do not have an immunisation passport, a member of the vaccination team will give one to you after the vaccination.

How can students/prepare for vaccination day?

On the day of vaccination, students should:

- Eat breakfast
- Wear a loose-fitting short-sleeved top



How do we know vaccines are safe?

All vaccines are safe and have been proven to save lives and prevent serious illness. Vaccines are strictly monitored and reviewed regularly by international bodies including:

- the World Health Organization
- the European Medicines Agency

All international bodies have continually reported that the vaccines used in Ireland are safe with no known long-term side effects.

Does HPV vaccine have short-term side effects?

Most people have no problems after the HPV vaccine. Some can have an area of soreness, swelling and redness in their arm where the injection was given. Some may get a headache, feel sick in their tummy or run a slight temperature. This usually passes after a day or two.

Does HPV vaccine have long-term side effects?

There are no documented long-term side effects of HPV vaccine.

Do people need to attend cervical screening even if they have been vaccinated?

Yes. Even though the HPV vaccine protects against most cervical cancers, it doesn't protect against all of them. So it is still important for women and people with a cervix to attend their HPV cervical screening every time they're invited.

HPV cervical screening is free for 25-65 year olds.

You can read more on hse.ie/cervicalcheck

Reporting side effects

If you think you or your child have had a side effect after receiving a vaccine, you can report it to the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) at <http://www.hpra.ie>. Your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or a family member can also report the side effect to the HPRA.

The consent form for vaccines

If you are 16 or older, you can sign the consent form yourself. If you are 15 or younger, a parent or guardian must read and sign the consent form to ensure you receive the HPV vaccine in school.

If a child is home schooled or receiving the vaccine in a community clinic, please return the consent form to the HSE immunisation team.

Where you can get more information

If you have any questions, please discuss them with a member of your HSE vaccination team, your public health nurse or your GP (family doctor).

You can visit www.hpv.ie and www.immunisation.ie for videos and fact sheets about the vaccines.

You can also find links to the patient information leaflets for the vaccine at www.hpra.ie. Search for Gardasil 9 (HPV) to read the relevant patient information leaflet.



Privacy Statement: In order to administer vaccine(s) safely, and to record all of the necessary data for monitoring and managing vaccine(s), the HSE will be processing your personal data. All data processed by the HSE will be in accordance with the various data protection legislation including the Data Protection Acts 1988-2018, the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR), and the Health Identifiers Act 2014. The processing of your data will be lawful and fair. It will only be processed for specific purposes including, to manage the vaccinations, to report and monitor vaccination programmes, to validate clients and provide health care. Data sharing between HSE departments may also occur.



The HPV Catch-Up Campaign continues the legacy of Laura Brennan, whose advocacy helped transform HPV vaccine uptake in Ireland.

About Laura Brennan

Laura Brennan from Ennis Co. Clare was a campaigner and advocate for the HPV vaccine. She died from cervical cancer in 2019 at the age of 26.

An RTÉ documentary, following the final chapters of her life, 'Laura Brennan: This Is Me', is available on the RTÉ Player.

December 2025

HSE National Immunisation Office.

HNI01901