



Vaccination to protect against **HPV**

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



About the Laura Brennan HPV Catch-up Vaccination Programme

In December 2022, the Minister for Health announced a catch up HPV vaccination programme. The programme was named in memory of Laura Brennan who advocated tirelessly for HPV vaccination before she died from Cervical Cancer in March 2019. The HSE is providing a **once only** opportunity for eligible people to get their catch-up HPV vaccination. The Vaccine is safe, effective and free. It is only available up until the end of 2023.

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 are offering catch-up HPV vaccines to:

- The below students still in secondary school – both boys and girls – who have not already received the HPV vaccine:
 - Female students in 2nd – 6th year of secondary school, homeschool or a special school
 - Male students in 2nd – 6th year of secondary school, homeschool or a special school
- All females who have left second level education and are under 25 years old on the date of vaccination, provided they have not already received the vaccine
- All males who have left second level education and are under 22 years old on the date of vaccination, provided they have not already received the vaccine. **(Of note: Unvaccinated female international students under 25 years old and unvaccinated male international students under 22 years old ordinarily resident* in Ireland for the purposes of receiving health services are also eligible for HPV vaccination under the catch-up programme).**
- Refugees and Applicants Seeking Protection in Ireland who are gender and age equivalent to the above listed groups are also eligible for catch-up HPV vaccination under the Laura Brennan HPV Catch-up Vaccination Programme – provided they have not already received the HPV vaccine.

*You are ordinarily resident if you have been living in Ireland for at least a year or you intend to live here for at least one year. For more information please visit Citizens Information at <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-system/entitlement-to-public-health-services/>

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 24 years old, we need people to read this information and consent to show that they agree to getting this vaccine.

This leaflet tells you about:

- the HPV vaccine – what it protects against and the doses needed
- the vaccination teams 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

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.

Getting vaccinated

The HSE immunisation teams will give the HPV vaccine in school or in an immunisation clinic. Most people will only need 1 dose of HPV vaccine to get protected. For people who are immunocompromised (have a weak immune system), 3 doses of HPV vaccine are needed.

- Dose 1
- Dose 2 is given about 2 months later
- Dose 3 about 6 months later (i.e. 4 months after dose 2)

If you have completed school you will be invited to get vaccinated at a HSE clinic. The vaccine is given in the arm.

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 HPV virus by being sexually active with another person who already has the virus. Most HPV infections go away on their own and 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.

Why is HPV vaccine given to both girls and boys?

The HPV vaccine has been offered to girls in first year in secondary school since 2010. This is because the most common cancer caused by the HPV virus is cervical cancer – cancer of the neck of the womb. However, the HPV virus can cause other cancers and conditions that can affect boys and men, and since September 2019, boys have also been offered the HPV vaccine.

When HPV infections don’t go away by themselves, they can cause certain kinds of cancer to grow. In males, these include:

- Oropharyngeal cancer (cancers of the mouth and throat)
- Penile cancer
- Anal cancer

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 50 of these countries giving the vaccine to boys and girls. These countries include:

- Australia
- Norway
- US
- New Zealand
- UK

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

This HPV catch-up vaccination is being offered to boys, girls, older males up to age 22 and older females up to age 25.

HPV vaccine is given in more than 140 countries to prevent cancers.

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

Over 550,000 students in Ireland and 100 million people worldwide have received HPV vaccine.

HPV causes 1 in 20 cancers worldwide.

How many doses of the HPV vaccine are needed?

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) has issued updated advice about the number of doses of HPV vaccine needed.

NIAC now recommend:

- **One dose** of HPV vaccine for people aged 9-24 years of age
- **Two doses** of HPV vaccine for those aged over 25 years old
- **Three doses** of HPV vaccine for people who are **immunocompromised** (i.e. have a weak immune system)

First year in secondary school (or as soon after as possible) is the best time to get the vaccine, as it is most effective if given at this age.

Common Questions

Can students in first year in secondary school decide to wait and get the HPV vaccine later as part of this catch-up vaccination programme?

Students who are now in first year of secondary school have been offered HPV vaccination this year as part of the routine school immunisation programme.

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 your child vaccinated through your GP (family doctor) and you will have to pay both an administration fee and for the vaccines.

The Laura Brennan HPV Catch-up Vaccination Programme is a once only opportunity for females and males up to a certain age who have not previously received the HPV vaccine to now receive it.

Is there a deadline on this offer?

Yes. This offer will only be available until the end of 2023.

Can people who previously received HPV2 (Cervarix) or HPV4 (Gardasil 4) vaccine, now get the HPV9 vaccine being offered in this catch-up programme?

No, if you received a HPV2 or HPV4 vaccination course in the past you do not need to be revaccinated with HPV9 vaccine now.

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/I 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
- the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the USA

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

What do I need to bring if I am getting vaccinated in a HSE clinic?

If you are being vaccinated in a vaccination clinic you need to bring ID that shows your date of birth and your photograph. This can include your passport or your driving licence.



***HPV vaccine:
Protects against
cancer***

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.

