

Do women who are vaccinated still need to do cervical cancer screening?

Yes. HPV vaccines prevent the majority of cervical cancers but not all of them. In combination, vaccination and cervical cancer screening provide reliable protection against cervical cancer.



What are the side effects of the HPV vaccine?

Many people who get the HPV vaccine have no side effects at all. Like any other vaccine, mild and common side effects are:

- Pain, swelling, itching, burning and redness at the injection site;
- Fever;
- Headache;
- Drowsiness;
- Nausea/vomiting;
- Muscle or joint pain; and
- Dizziness/fainting (in rare cases).

If your child experiences any other reaction, consult your healthcare provider immediately.

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The information in this pamphlet is intended to assist parents and guardians in making an informed decision regarding the health of their children and to increase awareness regarding the resources available to prevent cervical cancer.

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Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Health

HPV

Human papillomavirus



Frequently Asked Questions

A guide for parents and guardians



What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus transmitted through intimate skin-to-skin contact.

Most people (80%) will be infected with one or more types of HPV in their lives.

In most cases, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause health problems. However, when HPV does not go away, it can lead to serious health problems like genital warts or cancer.

HPV can cause cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, penis, anus, throat and mouth.

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix. It occurs when normal cells lining the cervix change and if not detected early, can lead to cancer.

How is Cervical Cancer prevented?

Vaccination, regular screening and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions protect women from developing cancer.

How does the HPV vaccine work?

The HPV vaccine stimulates the body's immune system to produce antibodies to the types of HPV found in the vaccine.

Why get vaccinated against HPV?

A person who is vaccinated before becoming sexually active will be protected from the most common and dangerous types of the virus. Vaccination protects young girls against HPV types that are responsible for up to 90% of cervical cancer.



Who should receive the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine is recommended for both girls and boys ages 11-12 years, but can be given as early as 9 years.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is administered in the upper arm. The doses are as follows:

Primary Targets:

- 9-14 years: 2 doses with a minimum interval of 6 months apart.

Secondary Targets:

- 15-26 years: 2 doses with a minimum interval of 6 months apart.
- 26 years and older (as clinically indicated): 2 doses with a minimum interval of 6 months apart.

Immunocompromised:

- 9 years and over: 3 doses.
- 2nd dose - 2 months after initial dose.
- 3rd dose - 6 months after initial dose.

How safe is the vaccine?

HPV vaccines were tested in extensive clinical trials before being licensed by the US FDA and CDC in 2006. Since then, more than 270 million doses of HPV vaccines have been given in 74 countries.

