

## VACCINATION AGAINST HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER

The ECCA supports the reduction of cervical cancer in Europe by promoting awareness of cervical cancer and the means by which it can be prevented. Drawing upon the expertise of researchers, clinicians and public health organisations from across Europe, the ECCA has prepared:

### The leaflets

- Cervical cancer screening
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and cervical cancer
- Follow-up and treatment of an abnormal cervical smear
- Vaccination against HPV and cervical cancer

### The booklets

- Everything you need to know to help you avoid cervical cancer
- Everything you need to know if you have an abnormal cervical smear

### For additional information

- 📄 Visit our website: [www.ecca.info](http://www.ecca.info)
- ✉ Send your questions to: [info@ecca.info](mailto:info@ecca.info)

- Vaccination provides very effective protection against the 2 most common types of HPV, HPV 16 & 18, that are responsible for about 2/3 of cervical cancers and many abnormal Pap smears, but does not protect against all the HPV types associated with the development of cervical cancer.
- Vaccination prevents HPV infection occurring in the first place. Therefore it provides the greatest protection if given before the start of sexual activities.
- Vaccination has not been shown to offer protection against disease if you have HPV 16 or 18 when you are vaccinated. Therefore, the benefits of vaccination may be less in women who are already sexually active as some will be infected with one or both of these types.
- The current vaccine appears to be safe with the clinical trials showing only minor reactions typical of any vaccination.
- **Vaccination against HPV reduces the risk of cervical cancer but does not eliminate it. Even if you have been vaccinated, it is important to continue with regular cervical screening.**

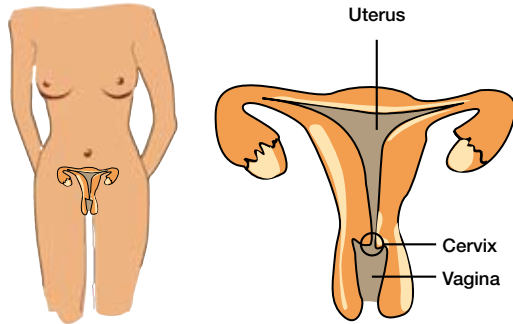
- What is cervical cancer?
- Why get vaccinated?
- Who should be vaccinated?
- Does vaccination provide complete protection against cervical cancer?
- How long does vaccination protect?
- Should boys or men be vaccinated?
- Is vaccination safe?

## VACCINATION AGAINST HPV AND CERVICAL CANCER



## What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer develops in the cervix, the part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It occurs when cells of the cervix are infected with HPV, become abnormal and start to grow in an uncontrolled fashion.



## Why get vaccinated?

Vaccination has been shown to effectively prevent:

- infection with HPV types 16 and 18, the two most common cancer-causing types of HPV,
- the development of abnormal cervical cells caused by these types.

Because of this, vaccination will reduce the risk of needing treatment for abnormal cervical cells and it should reduce the risk of cervical cancer.

One vaccine also protects against HPV 6 and 11 that cause most cases of genital warts.

## Who should be vaccinated?

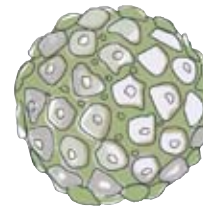
Vaccination prevents HPV infection occurring in the first place. However, HPV is very common and many women are infected soon after the start of sexual activities. Because of this, vaccination will provide the best protection if given before the start of sexual activities, and may be less effective in sexually active teens or women.

In the UK, one HPV vaccine has been licensed for use in children and adolescents aged 9 to 15 years, and in adult females aged 16 to 26 years. In addition, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (a committee of the Department of Health) has advised that girls aged 12 to 13 should be vaccinated on the NHS. However, official recommendations are not expected until later in 2007.

## Does vaccination provide complete protection against cervical cancer?

Vaccination effectively prevents the development of abnormal cervical cells due to the HPV types in the vaccine. However, it has not been shown to protect women who have HPV 16 or 18 at the time they are vaccinated. Also, vaccination does not protect against all of the other HPV types that can cause cervical cancer.

**For these reasons, vaccination does not provide complete protection against cervical cancer. Even if you have been vaccinated, it is important to continue with regular cervical screening so that any abnormal cervical cells can be found at an early stage when they can be easily removed to prevent a cancer developing.**



Human Papilloma Virus (HPV):  
the cause of cervical cancer

## Human Papilloma Virus & Cervical Cancer

There are about forty different types of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) that can infect the genital tract. Some of these may cause abnormal cervical cells that can progress to cervical cancer. HPV types 16 & 18 are among the most common types associated with cervical cancer, causing about 2/3 of cases and many abnormal Pap smears. Other types of HPV can cause genital warts. HPV types 6 and 11 cause the majority of cases of genital warts but are not associated with cervical cancer.

Genital HPV can be spread by any form of sexual

## How long does vaccination protect?

The current vaccine is given as three injections over six months. At present, we know that vaccination offers good protection against the HPV types in the vaccine and disease caused by these types for at least 5 years, which is the length of time women have been followed up in the clinical trials so far. Studies are underway to see how much longer the protection will last.

## Should boys or men be vaccinated?

Although men cannot get cervical cancer, they can pass-on HPV to their partner.

However, vaccination is not recommended for males in the UK as we do not yet know if it will effectively prevent HPV infection in males. This is now being studied and the vaccines may be recommended for use in boys and men in the future.

## Is vaccination safe?

Vaccination appears to be safe. The clinical trials show only minor reactions typical of any vaccination (swelling, itching, redness at the injection site and less frequently fever, nausea, and dizziness).

HPV vaccination is not recommended for pregnant women.

contact. It is very common and can occur at any time, but most people will get HPV soon after the start of sexual activities. Fortunately, most of them will fight-off their HPV and it will clear within 24 months without causing any problems. While a woman has HPV, it can produce the abnormal cells found on her cervical smear, but these also usually disappear once the virus has gone.

The problem occurs when some women do not clear their HPV. In these cases, the abnormal cervical cells may, over time, develop into cervical cancer if they are not detected through screening and removed. Currently, there is no way to tell who will clear their virus and who will not.