



HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI). Nearly all sexually active adults will have an HPV infection at some point in their lifetime. While most immune systems will identify the virus and clear it, some HPV strains may persist and can result in at least six cancers and warts. Countries with the HPV vaccine have the opportunity to drastically reduce cases of HPV-related cancers and anogenital warts.

Currently the national health program vaccinates against HPV with Gardasil. The vaccine is routinely provided to girls aged 12 to 13 in school in year 8 at school. In the UK, the government is currently reviewing what populations should be routinely vaccinated. Currently boys are unable to receive the vaccine. This policy leaves half of the population vulnerable to some cancers and genital warts. To help change this policy, please visit HPVAction.org. Males interested in being vaccinated must discuss vaccination with their private provider and pay for the vaccine out of pocket.

Here is some information to help you better understand the two vaccines:

	Gardasil (Merck)	Cervarix* (GlaxoSmithKline)
Gender	Females	Females
Age	9-26	9-25
Recommended age at vaccination	12 or 13	12 or 13
HPV types	16, 18, 6 and 11	16 and 18
Protects against	Anal and cervical cancers and anogenital warts	Cervical cancer
Dosage	Two over 12 months; each dose should be at least six months apart	Two over 12 months; each dose should be at least six months apart
Safe?	Yes	Yes

**From 2008 to 2012, girls in year 8 received the HPV vaccine Cervarix.*

Consent needed for vaccination is provided by girls, independently of their guardians. Individuals who receive the vaccine 15 years of age and older will need three doses of the vaccine over a six-month period.

Individuals may have questions about the jab. Here are answers to common questions:

If my child is not sexually active, why should I worry about vaccinating him/her against a sexually transmitted infection?

The vaccine is most effective *before* one becomes sexually active and is exposed to HPV. This is why it is best to vaccinate your child before he/she becomes sexually active. Nearly every sexually active adults will catch a sexually related HPV strain at some point in their lifetime. In addition, the immune response to the vaccine is stronger at a younger age.



Will the vaccine make my child more sexually active?

No. There is no evidence to suggest that individuals will become sexually active from the vaccine. An individual can become infected with HPV from having only one sexual partner in his/her lifetime.

If condoms are used during sexual activity, isn't that enough to protect against HPV?

No. While it is best to always use condoms and other barrier methods (i.e. dental dams) during every sex act, individuals can still be infected with HPV when condoms are used. Because HPV is transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, any area of the genitals that is not covered by a barrier is at risk of being infected with HPV. Similarly, HPV can be transmitted through intimate contact other than intercourse.

Can the vaccine treat an HPV infection that is already present?

No. It is important to be vaccinated for HPV before potential exposure because it only *prevents* the infection and does not *treat* or *cure* it.

I have been diagnosed with HPV, should I still get the vaccine?

Yes. You can be infected with multiple strains of HPV at the same time. The vaccine could protect you from a strain you have not yet been exposed to.

Doesn't the virus resolve on its own for most people?

Yes, although HPV-related cancers are on the rise, especially anal and oral cancers. It is not possible to determine who will have persistent HPV infections and who will not,

Up to what age is the vaccine recommended for?

The NHS provides the vaccine for individuals up to the age of 18. Women and men over 18 can get the vaccine but have to pay for it.

It is not recommended that pregnant women receive the vaccine. Individuals and caregivers of minors should consult their healthcare providers regarding questions they may have about the vaccine. For more information on the HPV vaccine, please visit our website at www.analcancerfoundation.org or NHS.uk.

For a glossary of terms, please see our Common HPV and Anal Cancer Terms page.

These fact sheets were reviewed by a nurse.