

The Women's Centre

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine: Gardasil

Information for Patients



What is the Human papilloma Virus (HPV) and why is it Important?

Human papilloma virus (HPV) is the name of a family of viruses that affect the skin and the moist membranes that line your body, such as those in your cervix, anus, mouth and throat.

There are more than 100 different types of HPV viruses, with about 40 types affecting the genital area. Infection with some types of HPV can cause abnormal tissue growth and other changes to cells. Infection with other forms of HPV can cause genital warts. Other types of HPV infection can cause minor problems, such as common skin warts and verrucas.

HPV in the genital area is usually transmitted during sexual intercourse.

Exposure to certain strains of HPV can cause changes in some cells in the cervix. These affected cells can potentially go on to develop cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia (CIN) and can progress to cervical cancer. HPV types 16 and 18 are responsible for 70% of cases of cervical cancer.

Genital warts are most commonly caused by HPV subtypes 6 and 11.

In the UK, cervical cancer is the twelfth most common women's cancer. Cervical screening picks up abnormalities in about 200,000 women a year, and around 2,800 women a year are diagnosed with cervical cancer.

Regular cervical screening (smear testing) is the best way to identify abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix. Once detected, any abnormal cells can be confirmed and treated using a procedure called colposcopy.

Why is the HPV Vaccine given?

Gardasil protects against HPV types 16 and 18 (which cause 70% of cases of cervical cancer) and 6 and 11 (which are a common cause of genital warts). It is over 99% effective and the protection is maintained for at least six years.

However, the vaccine does not protect against all types of HPV, and is therefore not guaranteed to prevent cervical cancer or genital warts. This is why women who have been vaccinated should still have regular smear tests and should still practice safe sex using condoms.

Who is the HPV vaccine for?

To provide the most benefit and protection, the HPV vaccine needs to be given before sexual activity begins. It can be administered to girls and women from 12 to 26 years of age.

The HPV vaccine does not treat cervical cancer, genital warts or HPV infection that is already present.

Is the Gardasil vaccine safe?

As with all medicines and vaccinations, Gardasil has undergone rigorous testing before becoming available and it has been found to be a remarkably safe vaccination.

Before having the vaccination, you should tell your doctor if you have a condition that makes you bleed more than normal or a weakened immune system. However, these conditions will not mean that you cannot have the vaccine.

The HPV vaccine should not be used if you:

- are allergic to any of its ingredients,
- have had an allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine
- are pregnant.

If you have a severe illness at the time of vaccination then it may be best to postpone the vaccination until you have recovered. However, there is no reason to delay vaccination if you have a mild fever, or an infection, such as the common cold.

The most common adverse reaction observed after HPV vaccine administration is short-lasting pain at the injection site. An immediate localised stinging sensation has also been reported. Redness has also been reported at the injection site. Other reactions commonly reported are headache, myalgia (muscle pain), fatigue, and low grade fever.

How effective is Gardasil?

Gardasil is more than 99% effective at protecting against HPV types 6, 11, 16 and 18. Studies confirm that the protection is maintained for at least 6 years.

Does the vaccine replace the cervical smear test?

No. It is important to continue your regular cervical smear test as only 70% of cervical cancers are caused by the HPV types covered by this vaccine. Having regular smear tests will help to identify and treat any changes in the cells of the cervix and help to prevent cervical cancer.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is given by injection into the muscle, either in the upper arm or in the higher area of the thigh. It is given as three separate 0.5ml doses at 0, 2 and 6 months. All three doses should be given within a 1-year period.

How do I arrange to have the vaccine?

Contact the Oxford Colposcopy Unit on 01865 572110

How much is the cervical cancer vaccine?

The colposcopy unit offers Gardasil vaccine for £350 for the complete course. Payment is required before the course is given. No refund will be given if the course of injections is not completed. See page 6 for a record of your vaccination appointments.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions you may telephone:

01865 572110 and ask to speak to the nurse colposcopist or the colposcopy access manager who will be able to take a message.

Further information

Further information can be found on the NHS Condition website:
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>

Clinic appointment and consultation:

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1st Injection

2nd Injection

3rd Injection

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

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