

INFORMATION FOR THOSE CONSIDERING HPV VACCINATION

You have been given this leaflet to provide further information following a discussion with your pharmacist.

Why should I consider HPV vaccination?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a double stranded DNA virus that infects squamous epithelia including the skin and mucosae of the upper respiratory and anogenital tracts. Although most infections are asymptomatic and self-limiting, **genital infection by HPV is associated with genital warts and anogenital cancers in both men and women.**¹

HPV-related cancers and diseases include:



anal cancer and genital warts in men and women²



cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancer in women²



How common is HPV?

About **8 in 10** sexually active men and women will be infected with one or more sexually transmitted HPV types at some point in their lives.⁴



The majority of HPV infections are transient and cause no clinical problems. However, persistent infection by a high-risk HPV type is the most important causal factor for the development of cervical pre-cancerous and cancerous lesions.¹



Over 100 million people have been fully vaccinated against HPV worldwide. This includes over 550,000 people in Ireland.³



What if I'm in a relationship?

The majority of HPV infections are transient and cause no clinical problems, so you or your partner could have the virus and pass it on through intimate skin-to-skin contact without knowing. Also, there are no HPV screening programs for men, so HPV infection can remain undetected.^{1,5}



Can I get vaccinated even if I've already had HPV?

HPV vaccination does not have any effect in individuals who already have a persistent infection or disease associated with one or more of the 9 HPV types in the vaccine. **However, HPV vaccination can still protect against diseases associated with the other HPV types in the vaccine.**²



What other precautions should I take?

As with any vaccine, HPV vaccination may not fully protect all of those who get the vaccine. The vaccine will not protect against every type of human papillomavirus. **Therefore, appropriate precautions against sexually transmitted diseases should continue to be used.**²

Vaccination is not a substitute for routine cervical screening. **All people with a cervix aged 25 years and over in Ireland are offered cervical screening tests.**³ This checks for HPV and types of cancer that are in the lower part of your womb. Going to your screening when you are invited is important even if you've already been vaccinated.⁶



Your pharmacist has recommended HPV vaccination

A prescription is required to avail of HPV vaccination in pharmacy. Speak to your pharmacist for more information.

Stay informed on vaccination safety

Can everyone have the vaccination?



The vaccination should not be given to those who:

- Are allergic to any of the active substances or any of the other ingredients contained in the vaccine²
- Developed an allergic reaction after receiving a dose of the HPV vaccine²

The following individuals should consult their doctor, pharmacist, or nurse before receiving the HPV vaccine:

- Individuals with a bleeding disorder (e.g., haemophilia)²
- Individuals with a weakened immune system²
- Individuals suffering from an illness with a high fever²
- Individuals who are pregnant²

What are the potential side effects of the vaccination?



Very common (may affect more than 1 in 10 people):

- Side effects found at the injection site (pain, swelling, and redness)²
- Headache²



Common (may affect up to 1 in 10 people):

- Side effects found at the injection site (bruising, and itching)²
- Fever²
- Tiredness²
- Dizziness²
- Nausea²

Fainting, sometimes accompanied by shaking or stiffening, has been reported. Although fainting episodes are uncommon, you should remain under observation for 15 minutes after receiving the HPV vaccine.⁷

References:

1. UK Health Security Agency. Human papillomavirus (HPV): the green book, chapter 18a. Updated June 20, 2023. Accessed December 10, 2024. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/649032b6b32b9e00ca969a7/HPV-green-book-chapter-18a-June-2023.pdf>.
2. GARDASIL 9 Summary of Product Characteristics. Available at: <https://www.medicines.ie>.
3. "About the HPV Vaccine." <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/schoolprog/hpv/about/about.html> Accessed June 2025.
4. World Health Organization (WHO). Questions and Answers About Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Published January 2020. Accessed December 10, 2024. Available at: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/librariesprovider2/default-document-library/who-hpv-qa.pdf?sfvrsn=d0bf716b_3.
5. NHS Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) in men. Accessed December 10, 2024. Available at: <https://www.chelwest.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-leaflets/medicine-services/human-papillomavirus-hpv-in-men>.
6. UK Health Security Agency. Easy-read guide to the HPV vaccination from September 2023. Updated September 26, 2023. Accessed December 10, 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hpv-vaccine-vaccination-guide-leaflet/easy-read-guide-to-the-hpv-vaccination-from-september-2023>.
7. "HPV Vaccine Recommendations" <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/hcp/recommendations.html> Accessed June 2025

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at www.hpra.ie. Adverse events should also be reported to MSD (Tel: 01-2998700)