

INFORMATION FOR THOSE CONSIDERING HPV VACCINATION

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

Why should I consider HPV vaccination?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a double stranded DNA virus that infects squamous epithelia including the skin and mucous membranes 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.

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, 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.**^{2,6}



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 which can lead to cell changes in your cervix. Left untreated, these changes could develop into cancer. You can reduce your risk of getting cervical cancer by attending all your cervical screening appointments when they are due.⁷



Your healthcare professional has recommended HPV vaccination

You can book an appointment today.

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.²

References:

1. HIQA. Chapter 10 - Human Papillomavirus - <https://www.hiqa.ie/reports-and-publications/niac-immunisation-guideline/chapter-10-human-papillomavirus> (Accessed September 2025).
2. GARDASIL 9 Summary of Product Characteristics. Available at: <https://www.medicines.ie>.
3. HSE. About the HPV Vaccine - <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/schoolprog/hpv/about/about.html> (Accessed September 2025).
4. World Health Organization (WHO). Questions and Answers About Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Published January 2020. (Accessed September 2025). Available at: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/librariesprovider2/default-document-library/who-hpv-qa.pdf?sfvrsn=d0bf716b_3.
5. HSE. About HPV - <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/schoolprog/hpv/hpv-human-papillomavirus/> (Accessed September 2025).
6. Meites E, Szilagyi PG, Chesson HW, Unger ER, Romero JR, Markowitz LE. Human Papillomavirus Vaccination for Adults: Updated Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2019;68(32):698-702. Published 2019 Aug 16. doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm6832a3.
7. HSE. What cervical screening is - <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/cervical-screening/why-go/what-cervical-screening-is/> (Accessed September 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)