

Ministry of Health and Wellness
Information Sheet
Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

1. What is HPV?

HPV (Human papilloma virus) is a virus found in the skin, around the anogenital area (penis, vagina and anus), mouth and throat. It can infect anybody. It is a very common infection.

How is it transmitted?

It is transmitted through skin to skin contact and sexually.

2. What diseases are caused by HPV?

Most HPV infections in both boys and girls, do not cause any symptoms and get better on their own; some do not clear up and can lead to warts (genital, palmar, plantar and flat warts), and increase the risks of developing different types of cancers, at a later stage of their life. Women may develop cervical cancer, vaginal cancer and vulval cancer. Men may develop penile cancer and anal cancer. Both men and women are at increased risks of developing cancers of the throat, tonsils and tongue.

3. How can we protect ourselves from HPV infection and its long term effect?

Vaccination against HPV is the simplest and most cost-effective means of protecting people against this virus and its long-term effect and has to be done at a young age.

4. Who need the HPV vaccine?

Both boys and girls are equally exposed to the virus and hence they both need to be vaccinated against the HPV.

5. Why do they need the HPV vaccine at such a young age?

At a young age, if the children are exposed to the virus, they are not fully developed to fight against the infection and may end up developing changes that may progress later on to cancer formation. The vaccine protects a person before he/she, is exposed to the virus. That is why giving the HPV vaccine sooner rather than later will help protect your child against cancers and diseases caused by HPV long before he/she is ever exposed.

6. When should my child be vaccinated?

The HPV vaccine administered is Gardasil-9. All girls and boys, who are 9 years to 15 years should get a single shot of the HPV vaccine.

7. Is the vaccine safe?

Yes, HPV vaccination is safe.

Studies continue to prove HPV vaccination works extremely well, decreasing the number of infections and HPV precancers in young people since it has been available. For example, since its introduction in the United States, studies have shown that infections caused by HPV have dropped by 88% among teens. Research has also shown that fewer women are developing cervical pre-cancers; similar result have also been obtained in England.

In Mauritius, vaccination against HPV started in 2016, and no serious side effects have been recorded to date. Like any other vaccine, it can also cause side effects, such as pain, swelling, or redness at the injection site, which disappear within a day or two.

8. Does HPV vaccine negatively affect fertility?

HPV vaccine has not shown any adverse effect on fertility. However, people are vulnerable to HPV cancers and pre-cancers if they are not vaccinated.

9. Advice to parents

The Ministry of Health and Wellness strongly advises all parents to vaccinate their child against HPV.

10. Procedures for HPV vaccination.

- I Prior to vaccination Parental consent for the HPV vaccination is mandatory.
- II Vaccination will be carried out under the supervision of a doctor.
- III The child should bring his/her Health Card for vaccination to proceed.

11. Contraindication for vaccination:

Any child with history of:

- a) high fever at the time of vaccination
- b) severe yeast allergy
- c) severe allergy to vaccine components
- d) severe allergy to a previous dose of the vaccine
- e) or found to be unfit for vaccination by the doctor.