



INFORMATION SHEET

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is a safe and effective way to keep you or your child from getting HPV infection which can lead to HPV-related cancer. The HPV vaccine shot is made with a tiny number of dead germs, which help the immune system learn how to protect itself against the real disease.

What is HPV?

HPV is a virus that infects the skin and mucous membranes. HPV can cause genital warts, and other forms of cancer.

HPV can cause cancer of the:

- Anus,
- Throat,
- Mouth,
- Penis,
- Vagina,
- Vulva, and
- Cervix.

Many of these cancers can be prevented by HPV vaccination.

Most people do not show any signs or symptoms when they are infected with HPV and can pass it onto other people without knowing.

The best way to protect against HPV infection and some forms of cancer is to get the HPV vaccine.

This vaccine is offered free of charge for everyone between the ages of 9 to 26.

If you are unsure if you or your child should get the HPV vaccine, please call 811 or book an appointment with your local health care provider to discuss it.

How is HPV spread?

The HPV virus moves from person to person, through skin-to-skin direct contact. This usually happens through oral, anal, genital or vaginal contact. Because HPV infection usually happens in these areas, HPV is generally considered a sexually transmitted infection (STI). HPV is one of the most common STIs. Three out of four “sexually active” people will get HPV at some point in their lives. “Sexually active” is used to describe any sexual contact, consensual or not, and may not ever include vaginal or anal penetration. A less common way that HPV can be passed on is through pregnancy from an infected mother to her baby.

Men who have sex with men, and anyone with multiple sexual partners, can have an increased risk of HPV infection.

Why should you or your child get the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine protects against 9 types of HPV that cause 92% of cervical cancers, 75% of anal cancers, 57% of penile cancers, 72% of vaginal cancers, 25% of head and neck cancers, and 90% of genital warts.

The vaccine is offered to people in early adolescence because this age group can make more antibodies – the proteins that protect you against unwanted substances – after getting the vaccine than older teens or adults. This provides long-lasting protection against HPV. It is also best to give the vaccine to a person before HPV exposure may occur, or before sexual contact begins. The vaccine will prevent most HPV infections – but does not treat HPV if someone is already infected.

Because there are many types of HPV, it is helpful to get this vaccine even if you’ve been diagnosed with HPV in the past. It can still prevent you from getting the other types of HPV that it protects against.

What are possible reactions to the HPV vaccine?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most people who get the HPV vaccine do not have any side effects or serious reactions.

For a small amount of people, possible side effects of the vaccine include:

- Soreness,
- Redness, and
- Swelling where the vaccine was given.

Other side effects may include:

- Fever,
- Fatigue,
- Muscle or joint aches, and
- Headache.

These are generally mild and usually last one to two days.

Who Should get the HPV vaccine?

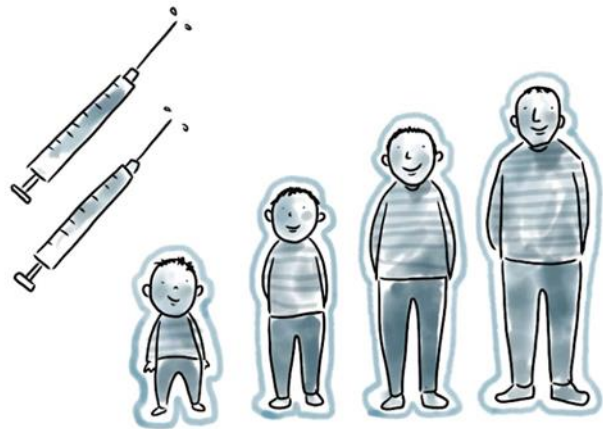
HPV vaccine can be given to people starting at age 9 and is strongly recommended until age 26 (if older you can speak to a healthcare provider if you are concerned about your risk). Regardless of age, it is a series of 2 shots given 6 months apart – unless you are immunocompromised (more vulnerable to illness), then it is 3 shots.

Who should NOT get HPV vaccine?

Please contact your health care provider to see if this vaccine is right for you or your child.

To find out more about the HPV vaccine, contact your local health unit and visit the following links:

- **NWT Immunization Schedule:**
<https://www.gov.nt.ca/nwtimmunization/schedule>
- **Immunize Canada** <https://immunize.ca>
- To track your family's immunizations, and to receive vaccine schedule reminders, download the [CANImmunize App](#)



It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction. This usually happens soon after vaccination and may include: **hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips.**

If this happens after you leave the clinic, call or go to the nearest emergency department or health centre for immediate treatment.

Please report any serious or unexpected side-effects to your healthcare provider.