

HPV VACCINATIONS

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is recommended by the British HIV Association (BHIVA) for men and women living with HIV up to the age of 26 years and should be considered for women up to the age of 40.

If you have already had this vaccine, you do not need to have it again. In the UK, a HPV vaccine programme for girls aged 12 to 13 has been in place since 2008 and was extended to boys aged 12 to 13 in September 2019.

The vaccine will help to prevent HPV infection which can cause genital warts and HPV-associated cancers. This leaflet includes information about the HPV vaccine and the diseases that it will help to protect against.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV) and what diseases can it cause?

There are over 100 types of HPV that infect the skin. Most HPV infections do not cause any symptoms and infections usually resolve on their own. HPV types 6 and 11 cause genital warts. Persistent infection with a few types of HPV can lead to an increased risk of developing some specific types of cancers. HPV 16 and 18 cause the majority of HPV associated cancers which include:

- Some head and neck cancers
- Some cancers of the anus and genital areas
- Cervical cancer in women

How is HPV infection spread?

HPV is spread mainly by close skin to skin contact. Genital HPV infections are usually associated with sexual contact. Nearly all sexually active people get infected with HPV at some point in their lives. The risk increases with the number of sexual partners you and/or your partners have.

Can HPV infection be prevented?

Condoms do not guarantee protection from infection. This is because HPV can be transmitted by skin contact with areas not covered by condoms. The best way to protect yourself from HPV infection is to get vaccinated.

The Vaccine

The vaccines we offer is called Gardasil 9. Gardasil 9 protects against HPV types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58. You will require 3 doses of vaccine at 0, 1 and 4 to 6 months.

Ideally, the vaccine should be given before you become sexually active, but the protection is still good even if you receive the vaccine later.

Does it have any side effects?

Like most injections, the side effects of the HPV vaccination are quite mild. Soreness, swelling and redness at the injection site are common but wear off in a couple of days. More serious side effects are extremely rare. The vaccine has been shown to be a very safe vaccine and has been widely used.

