

# Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and HPV Vaccine



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## What is Human Papilloma virus?

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the name given to a group of more than 150 viruses. More than 40 of these viruses infect the genital area and can cause cancer of the cervix, vagina and vulva, penis, anus and rectum as well as genital warts.

### How is it spread?

HPV is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact and through sexual activity with someone who has the virus. The majority of people with HPV infections do not have any symptoms. Most HPV infections clear on their own but persistent infection of certain HPV types may lead to the development of precancer and eventually cancer.

### How common is HPV?

Estimates indicate that at least 50% of sexually active men and women will have at least one HPV infection at some point in their lives.

### Can HPV infections be prevented?

Yes. There are several ways that people can lower their chances of getting HPV:

- Get vaccinated against some of the most common types of HPV that can lead to cancer and genital warts.
- Use condoms consistently throughout the sexual act. But HPV can infect areas that are not covered by a condom.

- Be in a faithful relationship.

### What is the HPV vaccine?

It is a vaccine developed to protect individuals from certain types of HPV and HPV related diseases. There are two types of vaccines, Cervarix and Gardasil. Botswana will use Gardasil vaccine which protects against cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva and anus as well as genital warts.

### How effective is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is nearly 100% effective in preventing infection caused by the four types of HPV that cause 70% of cervical cancers and 90% of genital warts. HPV vaccine is most effective when given to females before they are exposed to HPV. Routine secondary prevention of cervical cancer (pap smear or visual inspection using acetic acid) is still strongly recommended as per national guidelines.

### How is this vaccine given?

This vaccine is given as an injection in the arm muscle. The HPV vaccine is administered on a 3-dose schedule. The first dose will be given at initial contact, the second dose 2 months after the first dose and the third dose 4 months after the second dose. For full protection one must receive all three doses.

### Who should get this vaccine?

The vaccine is most effective when given to girls before first sexual act. In Botswana it will be given to girls in standards 4, 5 and 6 who are between 9 years old and above. .

### Who should NOT get this vaccine?

Girls who have a fever over 37.5 ° C or more a minor cold on the day of the injection, are allergic to components of the vaccine, or are pregnant should not be vaccinated.

### What are the side effects of the HPV vaccine?

Side effects are rare. The most common side effects include pain or itching at the injection site. Mild effects include rashes, fever, headache, dizziness, and nausea. Typically, these symptoms do not last long and clear on their own. Very rare allergic reactions such as hives, wheezing, swelling of face or mouth occur. If these symptoms occur, see the vaccinating nurse immediately or consult the clinic immediately if the nurse has already left the school.