

# HPV vaccination

Gay, bisexual and other  
men who have sex with  
men (GBMSM)

**For men**



**Protecting yourself against warts and  
cancer caused by human papillomavirus**

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is available from specialist sexual health (genito-urinary medicine or GUM) clinics for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) who are up to and including 45 years of age.

The vaccine will help to prevent HPV infection which can cause genital warts and HPV-associated cancers. It is especially important for those who are living with HIV, and those who have multiple sexual partners.

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 and mucous membranes. The majority of HPV infections do not cause any symptoms and infections usually resolve on their own.

Some HPV infections which persist increase the risk of developing some cancers. HPV types 16 and 18 cause the majority of HPV-associated cancers and increase the risk of developing these cancers, such as:

- some mouth and throat cancers (head and neck)
- some cancers of the anus and genital areas
- cervical and some genital cancers in women

Some other types of HPV such as 6 and 11 also cause genital warts.

## **How is HPV infection spread?**

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections in the UK. HPV is spread mainly by skin to skin contact. Genital HPV infections are highly contagious, and 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 HPV vaccine offered to GBMSM attending sexual health (genito-urinary medicine or GUM) clinics is called Gardasil 9.

It protects against nine HPV types: 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52, 58. These are the types that are responsible for causing the majority of cancers and genital warts.

The number of doses of HPV vaccine you will receive depends on your age and your health.

If you are aged under 25 years, you will receive a single dose.

If you are aged 25 years and over (up to 46th birthday), you will receive a course of 2 doses given at least 6 months apart.

If you are HIV+ or have a weakened immune system (immunocompromised) 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. To get the best protection, it is important you receive the recommended number of doses.

## **Why should GBMSM attending GUM and HIV clinics be vaccinated?**

The risk of anal cancer in GBMSM is higher than in heterosexual men. If you are also HIV+, this risk is higher again. In addition, GBMSM are more likely to get genital warts. GBMSM attending sexual health (genito-urinary medicine or GUM) clinics are known to have an increased risk of HPV infection and disease.

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. GBMSM stand to benefit less from herd protection from the years of female-only vaccination.

HPV vaccination is a very effective way to reduce your risk of genital warts and your risk of developing HPV-associated cancer in the future.

## Does it have any side effects?

Like most injections, the side effects of the HPV vaccination are quite mild. Soreness, swelling and redness in the arm are common, but wear off in a few days. More serious side effects are extremely rare.

The vaccine has passed the strict safety standards for use in the UK and has been shown to be a very safe vaccine. Millions of doses of vaccine have already been given to girls and boys in the UK and around the world. As with all vaccines, any reports of side effects are closely monitored and reviewed.

### **For more information on HPV, HPV vaccine safety and side effects:**

[sexualhealthni.info/stis/how-to-prevent-stis/vaccination](https://sexualhealthni.info/stis/how-to-prevent-stis/vaccination)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/hpv-vaccine-men-who-have-sex-men](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/hpv-vaccine-men-who-have-sex-men)

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A complete list of ingredients for the vaccine is given in the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL):

#### **Gardasil 9:**

[www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/7330/pil](https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/7330/pil)

## What do I do now?

Please ask your clinic nurse or doctor for more details. The vaccine is available in GUM and HIV clinics.

## HPV vaccination record

Record your HPV vaccination date(s) below to ensure that you don't miss out on protection against genital warts and HPV-related cancers.

Remember, to be protected you need to complete the full course of the vaccine:

HPV vaccine dose	Date
<b>1 dose</b> Those aged under 25 need only one dose	
<b>2 doses</b> Those aged from 25 years to 45 years need a second dose	
<b>3 doses</b> Individuals who are HIV+ or immunocompromised (people with a weakened immune system)	



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