HPV vaccine
Help protect yourself against cervical cancer
The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine helps protect against cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine is offered to girls from age 11 years at secondary schools across Scotland.

This leaflet has information about the HPV immunisation that you can have to help protect yourself against cervical cancer.
Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer develops in the cervix, the entrance to the uterus (womb, see Figure A below). It is caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus (HPV).

Cervical cancer can be very serious. After breast cancer, it’s the most common women’s cancer in the world. It’s also the most common cancer in women under 35 years of age in Scotland, and HPV is the main cause.

In the UK, around 1,000 women die from cervical cancer each year.

Getting immunised now will help protect you against some types of the HPV virus which are the most common cause of cervical cancer.
What is HPV and how is it spread?

HPV is very common and you can catch it through intimate sexual contact with another person who already has it. Because it’s so common, most people will get infected at some point in their life. People are often infected without knowing it as there are usually no symptoms. Most women who become infected with HPV clear the virus from their body but others develop cervical cancer. Having the vaccine is important because we can’t predict which women will develop cervical cancer.

The HPV (cervical cancer) vaccine

This vaccine helps protect against the two types of HPV that cause 75% of the cases of cervical cancer. It’s important that you get this protection early enough for it to be effective. The vaccine can be given at any time from 9 years of age upwards. However, it’s normally delivered in the immunisation programme at secondary school.

The vaccine doesn’t protect you against all other types of HPV that cause cancer, so you’ll still need to start going for regular cervical screening (smear tests) when you reach 25 years of age. **This combination of immunisation and cervical screening offers the best possible protection against cervical cancer.**

HPV immunisation has been on offer in secondary schools in Scotland since 2008. Uptake has always been high – 9 out of 10 girls choose to get the vaccine. Evidence shows the high uptake of the HPV vaccine has helped to reduce the levels of cancer-causing HPV in young women in Scotland by 90%.
The vaccine also helps protect against two other types of HPV that cause about 90% of cases of genital warts.

You can’t get HPV infection from the vaccine.

**Having the immunisation**

You will be informed by your school when your immunisation is due. The nurse will give you the injection in your upper arm.

If you receive your first dose before you turn 15:

- you will only need two doses
- you will be offered the second dose at least six months after the first.

If you receive your first dose after you turn 15:

- you will need three doses
- you will be offered the second dose at least one month after the first
- you will be offered the third dose at least three months after the second.

If your immune system is weakened due to any disease or treatment you will also need to have three doses, regardless of your age.

If you suffer from asthma, eczema, hay fever or other allergies, you can still have the vaccine. If you have any concerns about this, speak to your nurse first if you can, or your doctor.
**Consent**

You should have been given a consent form with this leaflet. You and your parent, or carer, should discuss the information in this leaflet before agreeing to have the immunisation. When you’re given this consent form, your parents are being asked to sign it and return it to school even if you aren’t going to have the vaccine.

We recommend you get agreement from your parent or carer, but it isn’t always necessary. More information on young people’s right to consent is available at:  
[www.nhsinform.scot/consentunder16](http://www.nhsinform.scot/consentunder16)

If you or your parent or carer have any questions about having the immunisation, speak to your nurse first if you can, or your doctor.
Side effects

The common side effects of the vaccine are quite mild – mostly felt around the area of the arm where you have had the injection (soreness, swelling, redness or mild itching). If you do experience any of these side effects, they will wear off after a couple of days.

Less common side effects are headaches, nausea and fever (high temperature).

If you feel unwell after the immunisation, take paracetamol or ibuprofen. Read the instructions on the packet carefully and take the correct dose for your age.

We don’t recommend that you take these medicines in advance to prevent a fever from developing.

Remember, if you are under 16 you should not take medicine that contains aspirin.

Some people have an allergic reaction soon after immunisation. This reaction may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body. The nurse will be able to advise on this.

Use this information as a guide only. If you feel very unwell, you should seek advice from your GP or call NHS 24 on 111.
Very rarely, some people can have a severe reaction soon after immunisation, which causes breathing difficulties and may cause them to collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction. These reactions are extremely rare and nurses are fully trained to deal with them.

You can find more information on side effects and a link to the patient information leaflet at: www.nhsinform.scot/hpv – click ‘The vaccine’

The vaccine meets the high safety standards required for it to be used in the UK and other European countries. It has been given safely to tens of millions of people worldwide, and used in Scotland since 2012.
If you miss your immunisation

It’s important that you have all the required doses to get the best protection. If you miss the immunisation session in school, you’ll be recalled to the next one.

The most important thing is to have all the required doses as soon as they are offered at school – it’s never too late to catch up.
More information
Visit www.nhsinform.scot/hpv to find out more about all of the topics covered in this leaflet. Or you can call the NHS inform helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88). The helpline is open every day, please check the website for the opening hours. It also provides an interpreting service.

There is also more information on cervical cancer and the HPV vaccine at Jo’s Cervical Cancer Trust: www.jostrust.org.uk
Other immunisations

Immunisations have saved countless lives and are one of the most effective measures to help you stay well. In S3 you will be offered a booster dose of the Td/IPV vaccine, which helps protect against tetanus, diphtheria and polio. You will also be offered the MenACWY vaccine, which helps protect against meningitis. You can find out more about these and other immunisations offered to young people at www.nhsinform.scot/immunisation
Glossary of terms

This glossary describes some of the terms used in this leaflet.

**Anaphylactic reaction**
An immediate and severe allergic reaction, which needs urgent medical attention.

**Cervical cancer**
Cervical cancer is a cancer that develops in the entrance of the uterus (womb). Cancer is caused by the body’s cells becoming abnormal and starting to reproduce in an uncontrollable way. These cells can then invade and destroy healthy tissue.

**Cervical screening**
During a cervical screening test (commonly known as a smear test), a sample of cells from a woman’s cervix is taken and examined for abnormalities, which can then be treated if necessary.

**Cervix**
The cervix is the entrance at the lower end of the uterus (womb) that connects the womb with the vagina.

**Consent**
Consent is a formal term for giving permission or agreeing to something.
Genital warts
Genital warts are one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV) and are similar to the warts you can get on other parts of the body – for example, the hands or feet.

HPV
HPV stands for human papillomavirus, a common virus that can cause cervical cancer.

Immune system
The immune system is your body’s defence system, which helps protect it from disease, bacteria and viruses.

Immunisation
Immunisation is the act of giving a vaccine, usually by injection, to encourage your body’s immune system to produce antibodies that will fight off a virus. It may also be referred to as vaccination.

Immunity
Immunity is the response generated by the body to defend itself against infection and other damaging hazards. Immunisation encourages your body’s immune system to develop antibodies, an essential part of the immune response.

MenACWY
A vaccine that protects against meningococcal A, C, W and Y disease.
**Td/IPV vaccine**

A combined vaccine that protects against three different diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and polio. It contains tetanus, low-dose diphtheria and inactivated polio vaccine. It’s given to young people, aged 13 to 18 years, to give longer-term protection against the three diseases.

**Virus**

A virus is a small micro-organism that can cause an infection. Different viruses can be passed between people in different ways.
How the NHS handles your information

You have rights in relation to the access and the use of your personal health information. For more information about your rights or how the NHS uses your personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), you can phone the NHS inform helpline free on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88) and ask to speak to a healthcare adviser or visit

www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When to immunise</th>
<th>Diseases protected against</th>
<th>Vaccine given</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks old</td>
<td>• Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and hepatitis B (HepB)</td>
<td>Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pneumococcal disease</td>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rotavirus</td>
<td>Rotavirus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Meningitis B (MenB)</td>
<td>MenB</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 weeks old</td>
<td>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and HepB</td>
<td>Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rotavirus</td>
<td>Rotavirus</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 weeks old</td>
<td>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and HepB</td>
<td>Six-in-one (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pneumococcal disease</td>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Meningitis B (MenB)</td>
<td>MenB</td>
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<td>Between 12 and 13 months old – within a month of the first birthday</td>
<td>• Hib and meningococcal group C</td>
<td>Hib/MenC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pneumococcal disease</td>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)</td>
<td>MMR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meningitis B (MenB)</td>
<td>MenB</td>
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<td>Every year aged 2 until the end of primary school</td>
<td>• Flu</td>
<td>Flu</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 years 4 months old or soon after</td>
<td>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio</td>
<td>Four-in-one (DTaP/IPV)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Measles, mumps and rubella</td>
<td>MMR (check first dose has been given)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls aged 11 to 13 years old</td>
<td>• Cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) types 16 and 18</td>
<td>HPV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Around 14 years old</td>
<td>• Tetanus, diphtheria and polio</td>
<td>Td/IPV, and check MMR status</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meningococcal groups ACWY</td>
<td>MenACWY</td>
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