

HPV Vaccine

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted virus. Most people do not usually develop any symptoms with HPV infections, but HPV can cause cervical cancer and is linked to other cancers, such as anal cancers, genital cancers, and mouth and throat cancer, affecting both men and women around the world. Getting vaccinated against HPV is an effective way to get protected at a young age.



Protection of the vaccine

HPV can be classified into more than 150 types. Most of them are harmless but about 40 types can affect the genital area of both men and women. The harmful types are classified as either low risk, which can cause genital warts, or high-risk, causing cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, anus, mouth, and throat.

In Hong Kong, HPV-16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52, 58 accounted for about 90% of cases of cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine offers protection for all of these types, as well as HPV-6 and 11. It gives extra protection against vulval and vaginal cancer in females, and prevents genital warts, penile cancer, and anal cancer in males.

Who should get the HPV vaccine

The vaccine can be administered to both males and females, and works best for boys and girls before they become sexually active, as it is most effective before any infection is acquired. People aged 9 to 26 years are recommended to get vaccinated, and it can also reduce the spread of HPV.

For those who are already sexually active, the vaccine may still be beneficial. However, if the person has already been infected with one or more HPV types, the vaccine can only provide protection against other types of HPV infections. The HPV injection is given through a series of two to three injections. Two doses are required for aged 9 to 14, while 3 doses are recommended for people who are 15 years old or above. Studies so far have found that the protection lasts for at least ten years. More research needs to be conducted to determine exactly the duration of the protection and if a booster vaccine is needed later.

One important point to note is that the HPV vaccine does not prevent the spread or infection of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), therefore, protected sex is always recommended.

Side effects of HPV vaccine

One common side effect is temporary redness, swelling or soreness at the injection site. People wishing to have the vaccination should inform the doctor beforehand about any drug hypersensitivity.

Special precautions when considering the vaccine

- It is very important to complete the full course of the HPV vaccination.
- The vaccine is NOT recommended for pregnant women. Studies so far suggest that the vaccine has not caused health problems during pregnancy or affected the foetus. However, it is advised that if a woman finds out that she is pregnant after having commenced the vaccination programme, she should complete the course after delivery.
- Individuals with impaired immune systems may have reduced antibody response to active immunisation so the effectiveness of the vaccine may be reduced.
- It is generally safe to use by lactating women.

Cervical cancer screening

Getting the HPV vaccine does not mean that a woman can skip regular cervical cancer screening, that is, a Pap smear, since the vaccine cannot prevent harm caused by pre-existing infections. Other types of HPV, which are not prevented by the vaccines, can also cause cervical cancer. Therefore regular cervical cancer screening is recommended. (See also the separate patient information for Screening for Cervical Cancer.)

Checked by:

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References:

Centre for Health Protection, Department of Health

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HPV 疫苗

人類乳頭瘤病毒（HPV）是經性行為傳播的最常見病毒。大多數人即使受到HPV病毒感染亦沒有病徵，然而HPV病毒可引致子宮頸癌，亦與其他癌症有關連，如肛門癌、陰道癌及口腔及咽喉癌等，影響著全球的男士和女士。年幼時接種HPV疫苗，能有效預防感染HPV病毒。



疫苗保護

HPV 病毒可分類為超過 150 種，當中大部分是無害的，但約40種病毒會影響男女的生殖器官。HPV 有害的病毒分為「高風險」和「低風險」類型，「低風險病毒類型」多與性病有關，而「高風險病毒類型」則可引致子宮頸癌，以及外陰、陰道、肛門、或口腔及咽喉癌。

本港約9成的子宮頸癌個案均屬於 HPV 16、18、31、33、45、52 和58類型，子宮頸癌疫苗除了可以覆蓋以上的 HPV 類型外，亦包括HPV 6、11，更為女士 提供預防陰道癌的保護，對於男士而言，則可以預防生殖器疣、陰莖癌和肛門癌。

什麼人士應接種HPV疫苗

男女均可接種HPV疫苗，未有性行為前注射子宮頸疫苗，效果最佳，因為身體還未感染 HPV 病毒，故此建議9至26歲人士接種，另外該疫苗亦有效減低 HPV病毒的傳播。

開始性行為後，接種疫苗亦具成效。然而如果接種人士已染有一種或多種 HPV 病毒，疫苗只能預防其他 HPV 病毒的感染。疫苗分2至3次注射，9歲至14歲兒童須接種2劑，15歲或以上之人士建議接種3劑。

有研究發現疫苗最少有效10年，但疫苗確切的有效年期及其後是否需要加強劑，則須待進一步研究。

要注意的是，HPV疫苗不能預防性病傳播或感染，故此性交時，亦需使用適當的保護措施。



疫苗副作用

最常見的副作用是注射部位感到短暫紅腫和輕微疼痛。對任何藥物或刺激物有過敏反應的人士，如欲注射疫苗，應先向醫生查詢。

接種疫苗前須注意的地方

- 必須完成整個注射療程。
- 孕婦不應接受接種疫苗。直至目前為止，未有研究顯示疫苗影響懷孕女士或胎兒的健康。然而，若女士開始疫苗療程後發現懷孕，仍建議她們在產後才繼續接種。
- 如接受接種疫苗人士的免疫系統受損，體內抗體對疫苗的反應會減低，疫苗的效果亦會減低。
 - 在一般情況下，餵哺母乳的女士接種此疫苗是安全的。

子宮頸癌的測試

接種HPV疫苗後，不代表毋須定期接受子宮頸癌檢查(即柏氏抹片)，因為疫苗未能就已受感染的病毒提供預防性的保護。雖然疫苗已能夠對大部分導致子宮頸癌的HPV病毒作出保護，但亦有其他HPV病毒可以引致子宮頸癌，故此恒常的子宮頸癌檢查仍是不可或缺的。(詳情請參考另一健康單張「及早檢查預防子宮頸癌」)

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參考資料：

衛生署衛生防護中心網站

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