

HPV Vaccination: Facts for you and your children

What is HPV?

HPV is a virus, like the cold or flu, which is usually spread during sex. Most people who get HPV won't know about it and their body will get rid of the virus within 2 years. But in some people HPV can cause genital and anal warts or cancers, like cervical, penile, and head and neck cancers. The number of people with cancers which can be caused by HPV is getting higher in Canada, with rising numbers of men suffering from head and neck cancers.

Who needs to be vaccinated?

The best time to protect your children from these cancers is before they are exposed to HPV. That's why it is best to get them vaccinated during their school years. Both girls and boys are at risk of cancers caused by HPV and protecting both sexes makes spreading the virus less likely.

If you or your partner have not had the HPV vaccination, ask a healthcare professional about it. Men are at risk of HPV infection throughout life and adult women are also at risk. Having an HPV vaccination as an adult can protect both men and women from cancer. It is never too late to be vaccinated, people who have had HPV can be protected from getting it again. The number of doses you need may be different due to your age or illnesses you may have.



Are there side effects?

The most common side effect from HPV vaccination is pain around the place where you got the injection. You might also see some swelling or redness. Side effects you might have experienced with other vaccines like a headache or chills are uncommon with the HPV vaccine.

Where can I get the vaccine?

Your child should be offered the HPV vaccine in grade 6 or 7 of school. You can also speak to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dentist, or local public health office about getting the HPV vaccine for you or your child. Doctors, nurses, and some pharmacists in Canada can give you or your child the HPV vaccine. Where you can get the vaccine might depend on the province you live in.



Common HPV Vaccine Questions and Answers

Question	Answer
Aren't HPV vaccines just for kids?	No, there is no upper age limit for the HPV vaccine in Canada
Will it work as well now I am older?	Clinical trials have shown the vaccine works well in adult men and women, but you might need more than one dose
Why do I need the vaccine if I'm married with kids?	The vaccine can protect you if your marriage fails, your partner dies, or is unfaithful. The vaccine can also protect against reactivation of the HPV virus
I always use condoms. Do I need the vaccine?	Condoms decrease HPV transmission, but they don't prevent it. Vaccination is the most important step in reducing risk
I've already had HPV, isn't it too late?	Vaccination can prevent new infections by other HPV types and from future reinfection