

GET TO KNOW HPV



Student Health Service
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What is HPV?

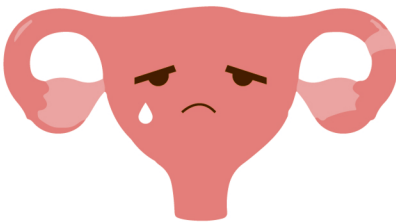
HPV is a group of viruses that include more than 150 genotypes. Around 40 of these viruses infect human genital organs (both male and female). HPV can be transmitted through sexual contact. Some viruses with high-risk genotypes can cause pre-cancerous cell changes and cancer (such as cervical cancer, vaginal cancer, and anal cancer).

Some females with persistent high-risk HPV infection in the cervix will develop pre-cancerous cell changes, and some may progress to cancer over years.



What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is a kind of cancer that starts in the cervix, which is the lower part of womb. It is an invasive tumour affecting the cervix. 'Invasive' means that cancer cells can spread from the surface of cervix into the deeper tissues, which in turn may spread to adjacent structures (e.g. vagina, nerve, pelvis and kidney). If not detected early, they will finally spread to distant organs such as liver, lung and brain.



Cervical cancer is by far the most common cancer associated with persistent HPV infection. Nearly all cases of cervical cancer can be attributable to persistent HPV infection.

Can Cervical Cancer be prevented?

Yes. Scientific evidence has confirmed that regular cervical cancer screening is an effective way to prevent cervical cancer. Other preventive measures to reduce the HPV infection and the progression from persistent HPV infection to cervical cancer are:

- Get HPV vaccination, the best uptake is before initiation of sexual activity
- Practise safer sex (such as avoid having multiple sexual partners and use condoms)
- Do not smoke



Who & When should get the HPV vaccine?

The World Health Organization recommends girls aged between 9 and 14 years, who are still not sexually active, should be listed as the target group for HPV vaccination to prevent cervical cancer. Eligible girls will receive two doses of HPV vaccine under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme. The first dose will be given in Primary 5, and the second dose will be given in Primary 6.





Is Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine safe and effective?

The 9-valent vaccine could prevent most of cervical cancers.

HPV vaccines have been used worldwide for many years. Clinical trials and post-marketing surveillance have shown that HPV vaccines have no obvious/ abnormal serious side effects. Common side effects are mild and transient. They are similar to those from other vaccinations, such as soreness and swelling at the injection site, fever, headache and nausea.

After comprehensive review of scientific research and information on the adverse reactions caused by HPV vaccines, the World Health Organization and overseas health authorities have expressed HPV vaccines are safe and effective with scientific evidence.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Cervical cancer screening is a simple and quick screening test that takes only a few minutes. In general, women who have had sexual experience between the ages of 25 and 64 should be screened for cervical cancer on a regular interval.

It is important to note that the HPV vaccine does not protect the infection from all HPV genotypes, nor clear the HPV virus in those who have already been infected. Even if the HPV vaccine is administered, women still need to be screened for cervical cancer on a regular interval.

Reference

World Health Organization. Human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer.
[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-papillomavirus-\(hpv\)-and-cervical-cancer](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-papillomavirus-(hpv)-and-cervical-cancer)

Department of Health. Cervical Screening Programme
<https://www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk/eindex.php>