

### How safe is the vaccine?

- The vaccine has been shown to be safe during large clinical trials.
- Some people may experience minor side effects such as redness, pain, and swelling at the injection site and mild fever.
- Very rarely an acute hypersensitivity reaction, or anaphylaxis, has occurred after vaccination; usually within 10 minutes of vaccination.
- If this does occur, it can be treated with drugs. For this reason, you will be asked to wait for 20 minutes after vaccination.

### Who should not receive the vaccine?

- Anyone who has had a life-threatening reaction (hypersensitivity or anaphylaxis) to yeast, or any other component of GARDASIL®.
- The vaccine should not be given to pregnant women.

### How can my daughter get the vaccine?

- From 2009, girls aged 12-18 who are at school will get information about the immunisation programme through their school.
- The information will include a consent form for you to sign and return.
- If you don't sign and return the consent form your daughter won't be given the vaccine.
- Girls aged 16 and over can consent themselves for the school-based vaccination but they still need to sign and return the consent form.
- Girls who are not at school (or if you do not want them to be vaccinated at school) can get the free vaccine from their doctor, practice nurse or health clinic.

### If vaccinated, do young women still need to have cervical smear tests?

- Yes. The vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancer, so if a woman has ever been sexually active, she still needs to have a smear test every three years between the ages of 20 and 70.

### The cervical cancer vaccine and the National Immunisation Register

- HPV immunisations will be recorded on the National Immunisation Register (NIR) so that reminders can be issued if the course is incomplete.
- The information will also be used to check the impact of the vaccine programme on cervical cancer rates.
- If a young woman or her parents decline to have details recorded on the NIR, this would make it difficult to contact them about any missed doses.
- However, young women can still receive HPV vaccine even if they choose not to have their immunisations recorded on the NIR.

### Where can I get more information?

For more information about the free cervical cancer vaccine, talk to your doctor, practice nurse or health clinic, visit [www.cervicalcancervaccine.govt.nz](http://www.cervicalcancervaccine.govt.nz) or phone **0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863)**.

Information about the National Cervical Screening Programme and smear tests is available on the National Screening Unit's website at [www.nsu.govt.nz](http://www.nsu.govt.nz).



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# Cervical cancer Vaccine



INFORMATION FOR GIRLS, YOUNG WOMEN  
AND THEIR FAMILIES





## Girls and young women can now be protected from the most common causes of cervical cancer.

The cervical cancer vaccine is available free to young women born in 1990 and 1991, and from early 2009 for girls and young women aged 12 to 18.

### Who should have the cervical cancer vaccine?

- The vaccine is available FREE to girls and young women aged 12 to 18.
- From 1 September 2008, young women born in 1990 or 1991 can get the vaccine from their doctor, practice nurse or health clinic.

- From 2009, most other girls and young women aged 12 to 18 will get the vaccine at school.

### What is cervical cancer?

- Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus or womb and is at the top of the vagina.
- Cervical cancer develops when abnormal cells grow on the cervix.

### What causes cervical cancer?

- Cervical cancer is caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a very common virus that is spread through sexual contact. Four out of five people become infected at some time during their lifetime.
- Most HPV infections clear by themselves, but some types can cause cell changes on the cervix that may lead to cervical cancer many years later.

### How can the vaccine protect against cancer?

The vaccine works by causing the body's immune system to produce its own protection (antibodies) against the HPV types that cause most cervical cancers.

### Why vaccinate?

- More than 99 per cent of cervical cancer is linked to infection with HPV.
- Every year in New Zealand about 160 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 60 die from it.
- Vaccinating girls and young women now against the main viruses that may cause cervical cancer will reduce their chances of getting cervical cancer later in life.
- In the long term more than 30 lives may be saved every year.

### Why is the vaccine given to girls from 12 years old?

- The cervical cancer vaccine is only able to prevent HPV infection; it does not treat the infection.
- For best protection girls need to be vaccinated before they are likely to be exposed to HPV, which means before they start having any sexual contact.
- Although having a sexual partner may well be a long way off, having your daughter vaccinated now will mean she has far less risk of developing cervical cancer in the future.

### How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine, which is called GARDASIL®, is given as a series of three injections in the upper arm over a six-month period.

### How effective is the vaccine?

- This vaccine protects against the types of HPV that most commonly cause cervical cancer (types 16 and 18) and genital warts (types 6 and 11).
- It is highly effective in preventing those types of HPV and related diseases in young women.
- The vaccine can only prevent the specific types of HPV before a person is exposed to them.
- Girls who are sexually active may still benefit from the vaccine because it is unlikely they will have been infected with both HPV types that cause 7 out of 10 cervical cancers.

### How long does vaccine protection last?

So far, ongoing studies show the vaccine protects against HPV infection for five years after immunisation, and suggests protection will last much longer.