

## **FACT SHEET ON NATIONAL SCHOOL-BASED HPV VACCINATION PROGRAMME**

### **1. What is HPV vaccination, what does it protect against, and who is recommended to receive the vaccine?**

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination helps to protect your daughter/ward against specific types of HPV infections which may lead to cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is the 10th most common cancer and 10th most common cause of cancer deaths<sup>1</sup> among women in Singapore.

HPV is a common virus that can infect many parts of the body. There are more than 100 different strains of HPV, grouped into (i) high-risk types (may cause cancer) and (ii) low risk types (non-cancer causing). About 40 HPV strains can infect the genital area.

- High-risk strains of HPV are associated with cervical, vaginal, and vulvar cancer in women, and less commonly, anal or penile cancer in men. The most common high-risk strains are 16 and 18.
- Low-risk strains of HPV may lead to genital warts or cause no symptoms. HPV types 6 and 11 are responsible for about 90% of genital warts.
- Other HPV strains may infect the skin of the fingers, hands, and face.

HPV vaccination is recommended under the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS) and National Adult Immunisation Schedule (NAIS) for all females aged 9 to 26 because of the cost-effectiveness and significant impact of the vaccine in the prevention of cervical cancer.

### **2. When will my daughter receive the HPV vaccination?**

Females between the age of 9 to 26 years who had not been vaccinated previously may receive the vaccine.

Under the school-based programme, HPV vaccinations are offered to Secondary 1 female students (i.e. 12 to 13 years of age). A female student may receive the HPV vaccination even if she has not started having her monthly menstrual cycle.

### **3. What type of HPV vaccines are available and which vaccine will be used for the school-based HPV vaccination programme?**

There are two types of HPV vaccines available in Singapore.

The HPV2 vaccine (Cervarix) is currently the HPV vaccine used for the school-based programme.

In addition to the HPV2 vaccine (Cervarix), the HPV9 vaccine (Gardasil 9) is also available in Singapore.

### **4. What is the difference between the HPV2 vaccine (Cervarix), and the HPV9 vaccine (Gardasil 9)?**

The HPV2 vaccine (Cervarix) provides protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which account for 70% of all cervical cancer cases.

The HPV9 vaccine (Gardasil 9) potentially extends protection against additional cancer-causing HPV types (31, 33, 45, 52 and 58) and genital warts caused by types 6 and 11. It is currently not included

within the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS) and National Adult Immunisation Schedule (NAIS).

The HPV2 vaccine (Cervarix) was selected for the programme following an assessment which included considerations on local disease burden, vaccine safety, clinical efficacy, and cost-effectiveness.

**5. How many doses of the vaccine are needed, and when will they be given under the school-based programme?**

The number of HPV vaccinations needed depends on the age of the student at time of first HPV vaccination. The required number and estimated timing of HPV vaccinations under this programme are as follows:

i) First dose before 15th birthday – 2 doses are required (2-dose schedule):

In a 2-dose series, the second dose should be given 5 to 13 months after the first dose.

- Minimum interval between Dose 1 and Dose 2: 5 months
- If the vaccination schedule is interrupted, vaccine doses do not need to be repeated (no maximum interval).

ii) First dose on or after 15th birthday – 3 doses are required (3-dose schedule):

In a 3-dose series, the second dose should be given 1 to 2.5 months after the first dose, and the third dose should be given 5 to 12 months after the first dose.

- Minimum interval between Dose 1 and Dose 2: 4 weeks
- Minimum interval between Dose 1 and Dose 3: 5 months
- If the vaccination schedule is interrupted, vaccine doses do not need to be repeated (no maximum interval).

**6. When will my daughter receive the HPV vaccination in school?**

The Health Promotion Board's (HPB's) Youth Preventive Health Service will work with your child's school to schedule the HPV vaccination.

If your daughter is unable to receive the HPV vaccination during the school visit, an appointment will be scheduled for her to receive her HPV vaccination at a designated clinic.

**7. What should I do if my child misses her appointment for the HPV vaccination?**

Please contact the designated clinic to reschedule an appointment for her HPV vaccination.

**8. If there is a delay/lapse in receiving the subsequent dose(s) of the vaccine, does my child has to restart from dose 1?**

If the HPV vaccination(s) are given later than the scheduled date, the immunity conferred should not be affected. There is no need for your child to restart the course of HPV vaccinations.

**9. What are the possible side-effects of HPV vaccine?**

HPV vaccine, as with any other vaccines, can result in side-effects. The common side-effects that may occur include:

- pain, swelling, itching, redness at the site of injection;
- mild to moderate fever;
- headache, muscle ache, joint pain;
- nausea, abdominal pain;
- feeling light-headed or dizzy

These are generally mild and resolve on their own. Parents should seek medical advice if your child continues to feel unwell after vaccination.

More severe side effects, such as an allergic reaction to the vaccine or vaccine component can occur, as with other vaccines. But these are extremely rare and normally occur immediately after the vaccination. Your child will be monitored for a short while following vaccination by the vaccination team who are equipped to manage such events.

**10. Are the HPV vaccines safe?**

Clinical trials and post-marketing surveillance have shown that HPV vaccines are safe and effective in preventing infections with selected HPV subtypes. The vaccines do not contain any live viruses or infectious material. This means you cannot become infected with HPV from the vaccines.

**11. Who can I contact for more information on school-based HPV vaccination programme?**

For more information on school-based HPV vaccination programme, parents can email [Contact\\_YPS@hpb.gov.sg](mailto:Contact_YPS@hpb.gov.sg)