

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 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.
- 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.

From 2027, the HPV9 vaccine (Gardasil 9) will be used for the school-based programme.*

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

** From 1 January 2027, in line with changes to the NCIS, the HPV 9 vaccine (Gardasil 9) will replace the HPV 2 vaccine (Cervarix) under the school-based HPV vaccination programme for female students who have not yet started or completed their vaccination series.*

4. Why did the vaccine type under the school-based HPV vaccination programme change in 2027?

The school-based HPV vaccination programme follows the recommendations under the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS). In line with updates to the NCIS in 2027, the vaccine used under the school-based programme will change from HPV2 (Cervarix) to HPV9 (Gardasil 9).

While both the HPV2 and HPV9 vaccines provide comparable protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which are responsible for 70% of cervical cancers, the HPV9 vaccine also protects against HPV types responsible for an additional 20% of cervical cancers, **providing broader coverage than the HPV2 vaccine.**

5. What is the difference between HPV types covered by 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.

Beyond HPV types 16 and 18, the HPV9 vaccine (Gardasil 9) protects against HPV types 6, 11, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58, covering an additional 20% of cancer-causing HPV types, compared to the HPV2 vaccine.

6. How many doses of the HPV9 (Gardasil 9) vaccine are needed, and what are the minimum intervals between doses?

The number of HPV vaccinations needed depends on the age of the student at time of first HPV vaccination. The required number and intervals for HPV doses 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 of HPV9 should be administered **six months** after the first dose.

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

In a 3-dose series,

- The second dose of HPV9 is given two months after the first dose.
- The third dose of HPV9 is given six months after the first dose.
- If the vaccination schedule is interrupted, vaccine doses do not need to be repeated

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

The 1st dose will be given in Secondary 1 and the 2nd dose will be given in Secondary 2. 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/requires a 3rd dose, an appointment will be scheduled for her to receive her HPV vaccination at a designated clinic.

8. My daughter received the HPV2 (Cervarix) vaccine for her first dose. Can she still receive the HPV9 (Gardasil 9) vaccine as the second and/or third dose?

Students who started on HPV2 may complete their series with HPV9, as mixed vaccine schedules have been shown to be effective against HPV types 16 and 18 and have acceptable safety profiles. In a mixed HPV vaccine schedule, the dose schedule can follow the recommended schedule based on

the vaccine type used to complete the series and as appropriate for the age group.

9. 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.

10. If there is a delay/lapse in receiving the subsequent dose(s) of the vaccine, does my child have 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.

11. My daughter has completed her HPV vaccination series with HPV2. Can I still request for her to receive the HPV9 vaccine?

For individuals who have completed their recommended HPV vaccination schedule with the HPV2, HPV4, or HPV9 vaccines, there are no further recommendations for additional HPV9 vaccine doses. Females who wish to receive additional doses beyond national recommendations, are advised to contact their preferred healthcare provider for further information.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

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