


HPV Vaccine Community Toolkit

Cancer prevention starts now



Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common virus that can cause several types of cancer. The HPV vaccine is a safe and highly effective way to protect young people from HPV before they are ever exposed to the virus.

This community toolkit outlines key information about the HPV vaccine, as well as information about how to raise awareness about the vaccine.

This toolkit covers:

- What HPV is and how the vaccine works
- How the virus affects the body
- Common myths and misconceptions
- Frequently asked questions

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Key messages

- The HPV virus is very common; **HPV affects both men and women equally and 4 out of 5 people may be infected during their lifetime.**
- HPV is spread through close skin-to-skin contact. Most infections clear naturally, but some persist and can lead to a number of different cancers.
- **The HPV virus causes approximately 10,000 cancers annually in the UK,** with head and neck cancers (oropharyngeal cancer) now exceeding cervical cancer.
- **The HPV vaccine is one of the few vaccines that can prevent cancer.** In fact, it's estimated that by 2058, the HPV vaccine could prevent more than 100,000 cases of cancer in the UK alone.
- **Over 280 million doses of the HPV vaccine have been safely given,** in over 130 countries across the world.
- The HPV vaccine programme has been running in the UK since 2008.
- **The HPV vaccine is routinely offered to all boys and girls aged 12 to 13 in Year 8 at secondary school.** This typically happens during the Spring Term. It is usually just the one dose.
- If a child misses their vaccine, they can still catch up through their school nurse, GP practice or local vaccination team, up to the age of 25.

What is HPV?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of viruses affecting both males and females. There are over 200 different types of HPV which affect different parts of the body.

HPV is split into two groups:

- low-risk HPV
- high-risk HPV

Most types of HPV are in the low-risk group.

HPV usually has no symptoms, and many people may have HPV without ever knowing it. In fact, 9 out of 10 times, the immune system will clear it within two years.

However, persistent infections of high-risk HPV can cause pre-cancerous cell changes and can cause certain cancers that affect both men and women.

How do you catch the virus?

- HPV lives on the skin and is spread through close skin-to-skin contact, particularly of the genitals, with infected people.
- Contracting HPV is not about promiscuity, as it can be contracted during a first intimate physical contact and *without* having sexual intercourse.

How does the HPV virus cause cancer?

High-risk HPV types increase the risk of developing some cancers.

About 14 types of high risk-HPV are linked to cancer and around 1 in 20 cancers are caused by HPV. Having high-risk HPV does not mean you will get cancer. In most people, HPV will go away without causing any problems.

If high-risk HPV doesn't go away, it is called a 'persistent infection'. It can lead to certain types of cancer:

- head and neck cancers
- cervical cancer
- vulval cancer
- vaginal cancer
- anal cancer
- penile cancer

Over 7 in 10 cervical cancers are caused by two high-risk HPV types. Cervical screening aims to prevent cervical cancer by testing for high-risk HPV.

How does the HPV vaccine work?

The HPV vaccine helps prevent cancer by stimulating a protective immune response. Early vaccination ensures protection before potential exposure to the HPV virus.

Research shows that the vaccine is most effective when given to young people at the age of 12-13.

The reason for the body responding so well at an early age is due to their strong immune system. Their body creates a strong defence against the virus so that it is quickly killed when recognised by the body.

The HPV vaccine:



**Stimulates
immunity**



**Prevents
infection**



**Long term
protection**

Delaying vaccination, even by a couple of years, may result in a reduced response and risk of exposure. Many countries vaccinate even earlier than the UK, for example, Pakistan, Portugal and Lithuania routinely give the HPV vaccine at the age of 9.

Key information about the HPV vaccine

What vaccine is used?

- **Gardasil 9** is the standard UK HPV vaccine.
- A **single dose** is enough to provide long term protection for most people under 25.
- It contains **no live virus, no genetic material, no porcine or animal products, and is suitable for Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and other faith groups.**

How effective is it?

- Young people vaccinated at ages **12–13 have around 90% protection.**
- Since rollout, the UK has seen major declines in HPV infections.
- By 2058, HPV vaccination could prevent **over 100,000 cancer cases in the UK.**

Who is offered the vaccine?

- All **boys and girls in Year 8 at secondary school (around age 12–13).**

What if someone missed it?

- They can receive the vaccine **up to their 25th birthday** through their GP, school nurse, or immunisation team.

Is the vaccine safe?

- Yes - **over 280 million doses have been given worldwide**, including 10 million in the UK since 2008.
- **The vaccine underwent over 15 years of research and clinical trials** before being approved for public use.
- The HPV vaccine is monitored continuously and meets strict UK safety standards.
- The vaccine is not a live vaccine and so you cannot contract the HPV virus from vaccination.

Are there any side effects?

- There can be mild side effects to the vaccine such as a sore arm at the injection site or mild fever or headache.
- Serious side effects are extremely rare.

Parental consent

- **Parental consent is required to vaccinate children in secondary school.** A consent form will be sent to parents in advance of the vaccine clinics in the Spring Term.
- Depending on which London borough you live in, you will either receive a link directly to your email address or mobile phone to complete the consent form, or the link will be shared through your regular school parent communications.

Frequently asked questions

Is the HPV vaccine linked to sexual activity?

- **No.** The vaccine is about **cancer prevention**, not sexual behaviour.
- It is given at ages 12–13 because it works best **before exposure** to the HPV virus.

Do boys need it?

- **Yes.** HPV affects everyone, and boys also benefit from cancer protection.

Is it acceptable for faith communities?

- The vaccine itself contains **no animal-derived ingredients** and supporting vaccination aligns with many faith teachings on safeguarding health, preventing harm and protecting the next generation.
- The HPV vaccine is widely considered both halal and kosher.

Do vaccinated women still need cervical screening?

- **Yes.** Whilst the HPV vaccine protects against most types of HPV, it doesn't protect against all types. It is important that anyone invited for cervical screening attends their routine appointment even if vaccinated.

Myth buster

Myth	Fact
<i>"The HPV vaccine encourages early sexual activity."</i>	No evidence supports this claim. The aim of HPV vaccination is solely health protection.
<i>"It's only needed for girls."</i>	The vaccine protects men and women against certain cancers. It is now offered to both boys and girls.
<i>"The HPV vaccine isn't safe."</i>	Over 280 million people have been safely vaccinated worldwide (2006-2022).
<i>"The HPV vaccine is a contraceptive."</i>	The HPV vaccine does not prevent pregnancy and is not a contraceptive.
<i>"My child will get a mild case of HPV when they receive the vaccine."</i>	It is not possible for anyone to become infected with HPV as there is no live virus in the vaccine.
<i>"HPV is uncommon, and infection is unlikely."</i>	80% people will have HPV during their life, many without symptoms.

Myth	Fact
<i>"HPV can be treated."</i>	There is no cure or treatment for the HPV virus. But there are ways to treat HPV-related health problems, such as precancerous lesions and warts.
<i>"Wearing a condom protects you against HPV."</i>	HPV is spread through skin contact; it is therefore not possible to protect yourself in this way.
<i>"HPV vaccines are new so there is no safety data on long-term side effects."</i>	We have 15 years of real-life experience with several hundred million doses distributed worldwide.
<i>"Children are not sexually active so there is no need to vaccinate them early."</i>	It is important that young people build immunity against HPV before they are exposed to it.



Faith and the HPV vaccine

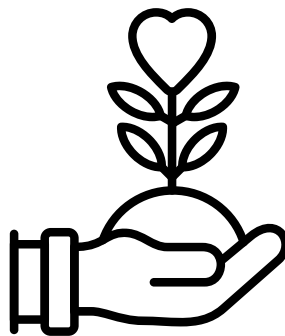
Many faith communities emphasise caring for our bodies and protecting those we love. The HPV vaccine is a simple way to safeguard future health and prevent several cancers.

Faith teaches us to value life, health, and the wellbeing of our community. The HPV vaccine is a safe and effective step that supports long-term wellbeing and reflects the shared value of protecting our families and communities.

Keeping our children healthy is one of our most important responsibilities. The HPV vaccine is safe, trusted, and helps protect young people from HPV-related cancers. It's one more way to care for the next generation.

Protecting their health is an act of care for both them and our community.

The following information has been developed in conjunction with the Faiths Forum for London.



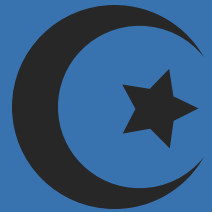
Christianity

- **Stewardship of God’s gift of health:** Christians believe our bodies are a gift from God. The HPV vaccine is a simple way to care for that gift by helping protect against several cancers. Taking steps to safeguard health reflects good stewardship and gratitude for God’s provision.
- **Loving our neighbour:** Jesus calls Christians to love their neighbours as they love themselves. Choosing the HPV vaccine helps protect not just our own health, but the wellbeing of families and communities. Caring for one another includes taking steps that prevent illness and promotes a healthy future for all.
- **Community wellbeing:** Church communities thrive when members are healthy and supported. The HPV vaccine helps prevent cancers caused by HPV and contributes to the wellbeing of the whole community. Taking steps to protect health is an act of love and responsibility.



Hinduism

- **Caring for health as a sacred duty:** In Hindu philosophy, *dharma* includes the duty to care for ourselves and those around us. The HPV vaccine helps prevent several cancers and supports long-term wellbeing. Protecting health is one way to honour responsibilities to family and community.
- **Preventing harm before it happens:** *Ahimsa* teaches us to avoid harm whenever possible. The HPV vaccine reduces the risk of HPV-related cancers, helping to prevent suffering in the future. Taking steps to stay healthy reflects this core value of non-harm.
- **Caring for others through healthy choices:** Acts of *seva* - selfless service - can be simple and practical. By choosing the HPV vaccine, we help protect not only ourselves but also our families and wider community. Maintaining good health strengthens our capacity to serve and support others.
- **The body as a temple:** Hindu teachings often describe the body as a temple. Looking after it is a form of respect and gratitude. The HPV vaccine is a safe and effective way to protect the body from preventable cancers, supporting overall health and wellbeing.



Islam

- **Preserving health as an Islamic responsibility:** In Islam, protecting health is a form of *amanah* - a trust from Allah. The HPV vaccine helps prevent several cancers and supports long-term wellbeing. Taking steps to look after our health reflects this responsibility.
- **Preventing harm:** Islamic teachings emphasise preventing harm before it occurs - *la darar wa la dirar*. The HPV vaccine helps reduce the risk of HPV-related cancers, protecting from future illness. Making healthy choices is one way to live by this principle.
- **Halal, safe, and community-focused health choices:** Many Muslims value reassurance that healthcare is safe, ethical, and beneficial. The HPV vaccine is widely used and supports long-term health by preventing HPV-related cancers. Protecting the community's wellbeing aligns with Islamic values of mutual care and responsibility.



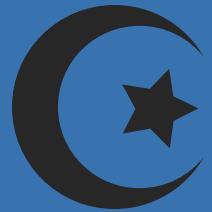
Judaism

- **Protecting life comes first:** In Judaism, *pikuach nefesh* - protecting life - takes precedence over almost everything. The HPV vaccine helps prevent several cancers, making it a simple step that supports this core value of safeguarding health and life.
- **Caring for the body:** Jewish tradition teaches *shmirat ha'guf*, the responsibility to care for our bodies. The HPV vaccine is a safe, effective way to prevent HPV-related cancers and protect long-term wellbeing. Caring for our health is an act of respect and gratitude.
- **Responsibility for one another:** *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* - we are responsible for one another. Choosing the HPV vaccine helps protect families and communities by reducing the risk of cancer. Health is a shared responsibility, and small steps make a big difference.
- **Protecting future generations:** Jewish life celebrates continuity *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation. The HPV vaccine helps protect young people from certain cancers later in life. Supporting vaccination is one way to care for the health and future of the next generation.



Sikhism

- **Wellbeing for all:** Sikhism teaches us to uplift the wellbeing of everyone - *sarbat da bhala*. The HPV vaccine supports this by protecting against several cancers and helping our communities stay healthy. Caring for health is an act of collective responsibility.
- **Seva through healthy choices:** *Seva* means serving others with compassion. Choosing the HPV vaccine helps protect not just ourselves, but also our families and wider community by preventing HPV-related cancers. Looking after our health strengthens our ability to serve.
- **Respecting the body as a gift:** Sikhism teaches that the human body is a precious gift from Vaheguru. Caring for it is a form of respect and gratitude. The HPV vaccine offers long-term protection against preventable cancers, supporting the health and balance of mind, body, and spirit.
- **Protecting the next generation:** Sikh families hold a deep commitment to nurturing and protecting children. The HPV vaccine is safe and effective and helps prevent certain cancers later in life. Supporting vaccination is one way we can help the next generation grow strong and healthy.



Supporting families and communities

Community organisations and faith leaders can help protect the next generation by:



Creating safe spaces for questions and discussion



Reinforcing that the HPV vaccine protects the whole community



Challenging myths and misinformation



Sharing NHS-verified information about the HPV vaccine



Encouraging parents to return consent forms

For more information on the HPV vaccine visit:
www.nhs.uk/hpv

Raising awareness

Below is content that you can use to communicate about this campaign in newsletters, emails, websites, e-bulletins and social media. Please use the hashtags:

#HPVVaccine #OneJabLongTermProtection

Instagram

Please tag @rmpartnersnhs

Bluesky / X

Please tag @RMPartnersNHS

LinkedIn

Please tag @RMPartnersNHSCancerAlliance

For use in your own WhatsApp groups/channels.

Short messages for posters or leaflets:

- "The HPV vaccine helps prevent cancer — protect your child today."
- "One dose at age 12–13 provides long-lasting, lifesaving protection."
- "Safe. Effective. No animal ingredients."
- "Available to all young people up to age 25 if missed in school."
- "Vaccination today protects the adults of tomorrow."

Suggested short copy

Post 1

The HPV vaccine helps protect against several different cancers. It's a simple step that can make a huge difference later in life.

#HPVVaccine #OneJabLongTermProtection

Post 2

Did you know? The HPV vaccine is most effective when given before exposure to the virus, which is why it's offered to young people at school. A small jab today = long term protection for the future.

#HPVVaccine #OneJabLongTermProtection

Post 3

Protect their future. The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and helps prevent several types of cancer. If your child is offered it at school, say yes.

#HPVVaccine #OneJabLongTermProtection

Post 4

The HPV vaccine has been used safely around the world for years. It's one of the strongest tools we have to prevent cancer later in life. Make sure your child doesn't miss out.

#HPVVaccine #OneJabLongTermProtection

Suggested long copy

Looking after our own health and our families' health is important to all of us. Alongside eating well and staying active, vaccinations help play a vital role in keeping us healthy and our community safe. Vaccines teach the body how to recognise and fight infections before they cause harm, and over time have helped reduce many serious diseases.

The HPV vaccine

One important virus we can prevent through vaccination is the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is extremely common, and most people will come into contact with it at some point in their lives. In many cases, it causes no symptoms and clears on its own. However, some types of HPV can lead to health problems later in life, including cancers, such as head and neck and cervical.

The HPV vaccine provides strong protection against the types of HPV most likely to cause cancer. It is offered to both boys and girls around Year 8, when it is most effective.

The vaccine does not contain the live virus; instead, it trains the immune system to respond quickly and safely.

The vaccine does not contain any porcine or other animal ingredients and is widely accepted as halal and kosher. It has been used worldwide for many years and is closely monitored to ensure it remains safe and effective.

HPV vaccinations

The HPV vaccine will be offered in your local secondary school from April to Year 8 students and above.

To learn more about the programme in your area and register for an upcoming HPV vaccine information webinar, visit:

- **North West London** (Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster)

[Vaccination UK](#)

- **South West London** (Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth)

[Kingston & Richmond NHS Foundation Trust](#)

By choosing the HPV vaccine, you are giving your child an extra layer of protection that will benefit them long into their adult life.

#HPVVaccine #OneJabLongTermProtection

Useful resources

For further information about the HPV vaccine, please visit:

- **NHS Inform:** [HPV vaccine | NHS inform](#)
- **Arm Against Cancer HPV Leaflet (available in multiple languages):** [The universal HPV immunisation programme](#)
- **Bristol Educate HPV video:** <https://youtu.be/rHUMDOI3s2U>
- **NHS Vaccination Schedule:** [NHS vaccinations and when to have them - NHS](#)

This HPV Vaccine Community Toolkit has been produced by RM Partners NHS Cancer Alliance

