



National Institute for Public Health  
and the Environment  
*Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport*

# HPV vaccinations *for girls*

National Immunisation Programme



# Why do we vaccinate for HPV?

**When you are vaccinated against HPV, you will be protected from developing cervical cancer. Every year, about 700 women get cervical cancer, and about 200 women die from this disease.**

## What is HPV?

HPV is the abbreviation for human papillomavirus. These viruses can cause cervical cancer and cancer in the throat, the anus and genitals.

## How do you get HPV?

HPV is transmitted through sex and is very contagious. Almost all women will get an HPV infection at some point in time. In almost all cases, your body will get rid of the virus all on its own. But sometimes it cannot. In those cases, the virus remains in your body.

## Vaccination: how does it work?

You get the injection in your upper arm. It takes 2 injections to achieve effective protection. There are six months between the first and second injection. The injection is free of charge and will be administered by your local youth healthcare service.



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Would you like to know more about HPV?

Go to [rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/english](https://rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/english)



### Does it really work?

The HPV vaccine protects you against 2 dangerous HPV variants (HPV type 16 and 18). Together, these two types cause approximately 70% of all cases of cervical cancer. Once you get vaccinated, you will have better protection against cervical cancer. But it does not offer 100% protection.

### Are there any side-effects?

Most girls have sore muscles in the arm where they had the injection. Sometimes they do not feel well for a little while. They get headaches, stomach aches, or fever. But in general those symptoms are not serious and usually only last a day or so.

### Why vaccinate now?

The vaccination is most effective if you get it before you start having sex. That is why girls are vaccinated in the year that they turn 13. The vaccination results in a longlasting protection. If you get vaccinated at this age, you only need 2 injections. If you postpone the vaccinations till you turn 15, you will need 3 injections.

## What happens if you get an HPV infection

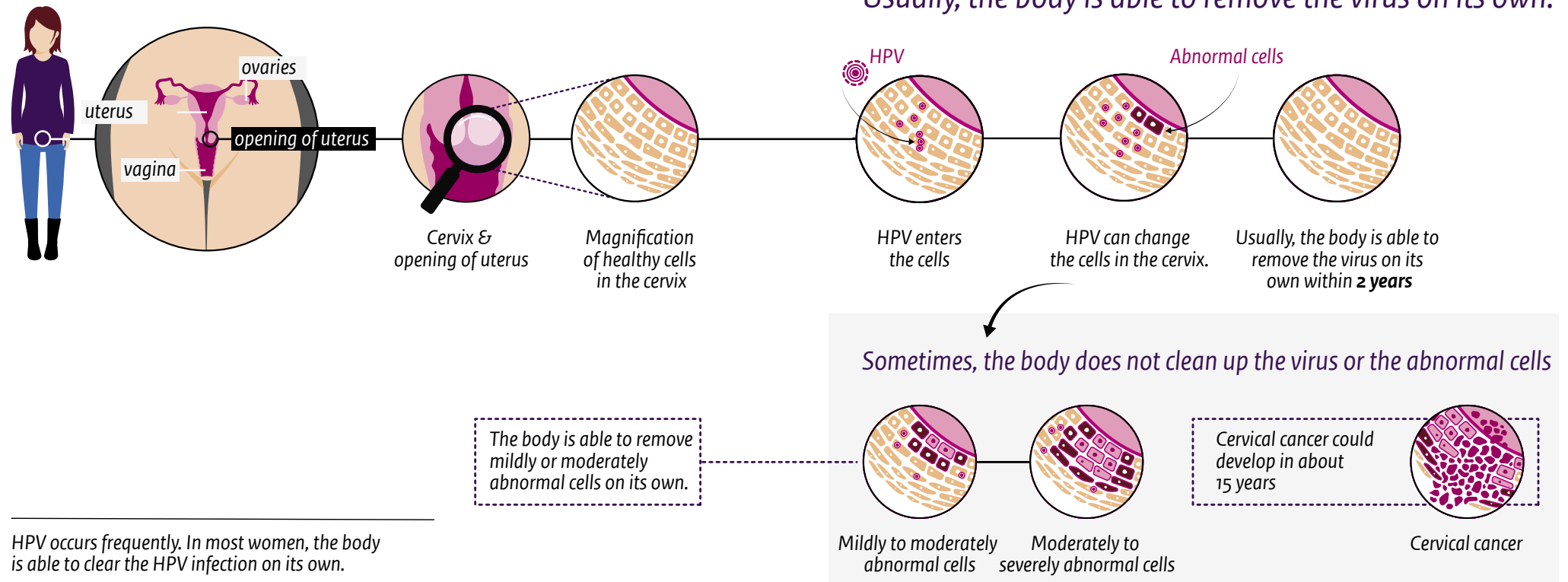
If you get an HPV infection, the body is nearly always able to remove the virus on its own. But sometimes your body cannot get rid of it completely. This is how it works.

1. You have sex. You get an HPV infection.
2. The virus is present in the cells of your cervix.
3. The body is nearly always able to clean up the virus on its own within two years.
4. Sometimes, your body does not manage to clean up the virus completely. In those cases, abnormal cells form in your cervix.
5. The abnormal cells will remain in your cervix for 10 to 15 years. That is how cervical cancer could develop.

## What happens once you have been vaccinated for HPV

Once you have been vaccinated for HPV, the vaccine helps your body to get rid of the virus. This is how it works.

1. In response to the vaccination, your body will make antibodies.
2. You have sex. You get an HPV infection.
3. The antibodies will make sure that your body destroys the virus completely.
4. The antibodies remain in your body, so you will be protected for a very long time.
5. And the cells in your cervix stay healthy.



# Interesting facts

## Type 16 en 18

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There are different types of HPV viruses. Type 16 and 18 are the most dangerous types. Together, these viruses cause approximately 70% of all cases of cervical cancer. If you get vaccinated, you will be protected against these 2 types.

## Cervical cancer

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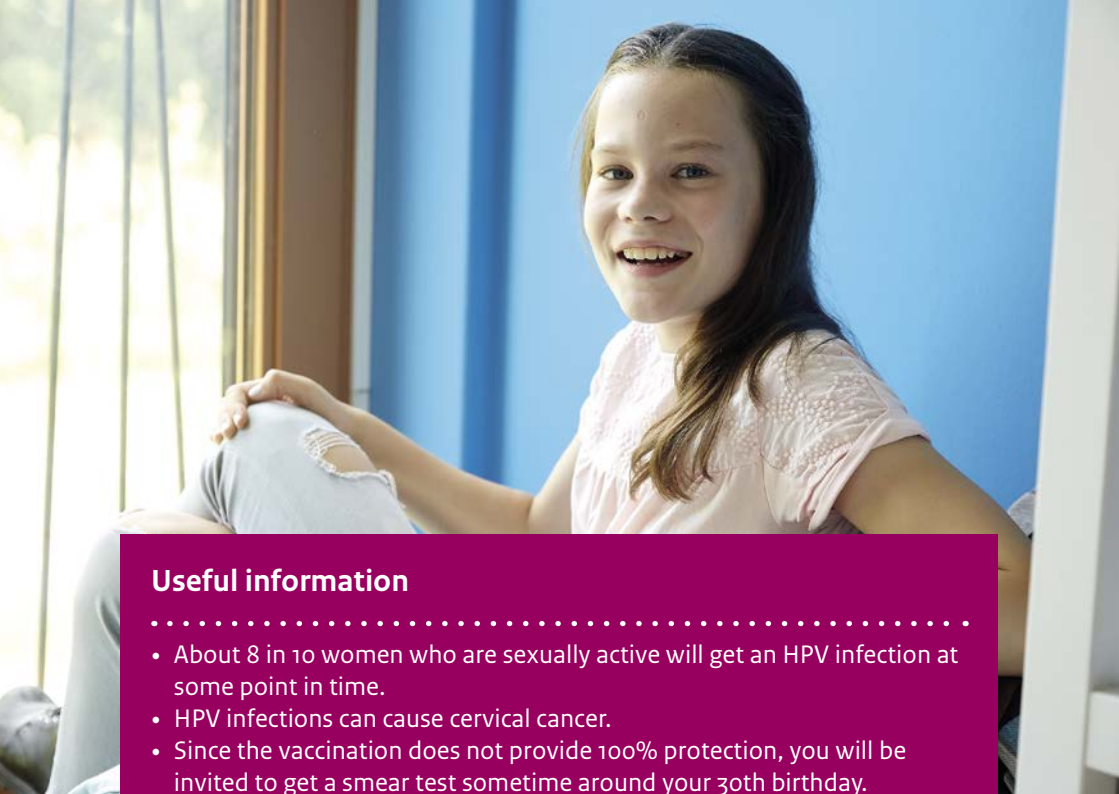
- Cervical cancer is not hereditary.
- Cervical cancer is caused by a long-lasting HPV infection.
- It takes a long time before HPV can develop into cervical cancer, usually at least 15 years.
- The abnormal cells remain in the early stages of cervical cancer for a long time. Treatment at this stage can prevent the development of cervical cancer.

## HPV

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- Nearly everyone is infected with HPV at least once.
- If you get HPV, you will not notice that you have it. You can get HPV from sex, but also from skin-to-skin contact in the genital region. This means that a condom does not provide complete protection.
- HPV infection cannot be treated. There is no medication against it.
- Your body usually cleans up HPV within two years.
- It is difficult to know who infected you with HPV and exactly when this occurred. It could have been as long as 10 years ago.
- HPV may change cells in the cervix. Those cells could turn into the early stages, and eventually develop into cervical cancer.

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Would you like to know more about cervical cancer? Go to [bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl](http://bevolkingsonderzoekbaarmoederhalskanker.nl)



## Useful information

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- About 8 in 10 women who are sexually active will get an HPV infection at some point in time.
- HPV infections can cause cervical cancer.
- Since the vaccination does not provide 100% protection, you will be invited to get a smear test sometime around your 30th birthday.
- Every year, 8,000 women are referred to the gynaecologist for a follow-up examination to check for cervical cancer.
- In spite of all these efforts, approximately 700 women in the Netherlands develop cervical cancer every year, and about nearly 200 of those women die from the disease.

## Information about the vaccination

Since 2009, the HPV vaccination has been included in the National Immunisation Programme. This programme protects all children in the Netherlands against infectious diseases. RIVM, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, provides information on the vaccines. All vaccinations from the National Immunisation Programme are voluntary and free of charge.

The vaccinations are recorded in three places: in the medical records maintained by the youth healthcare services, on your vaccination certificate and at RIVM. RIVM uses this information to keep a close eye on the quality of the programme, to send reminders, to provide copies of the vaccination certificates, and to check how many children and young people in the Netherlands have been vaccinated.

# This is how vaccinations work



## 1 THE LETTER

You will receive an invitation at home to come get the vaccination. The invitation includes a letter from your local youth healthcare services. It states when and where the vaccination will take place. It also includes a vaccination invitation card and a vaccination certificate, and this brochure.

## 2 QUESTIONS

Do you still have questions after reading this brochure? You can ask them at the youth healthcare services location where you get the vaccination.



## 3 GOING TO GET VACCINATED

Bring your vaccination invitation card and the vaccination certificate with you when you visit youth healthcare services to get your vaccination. If you have been ill or are taking medication, make sure to tell them.



*"I want to avoid getting cervical cancer, so I got vaccinated. My parents also thought it was a good idea."*

## This is why I am doing it

*"The first injection was a bit painful, because I tensed my arm too much. If you just leave your arm hanging by your side and look the other way for a moment, you will feel it a lot less."*



#### ④ FIRST VACCINATION

You get the injection in your upper arm.



*“Suppose I don’t do it, and then I get cervical cancer twenty years from now. I really do not want to go through that.”*

#### ⑤ SECOND VACCINATION

You get the second vaccination six months later.

Bring your second vaccination request card and vaccination certificate with you.

Are you 15 years of age or older? Then you will get the second injection after one month and the third injection after about six months.



Gemma Kenter, gynaecologist:

*“I advise every girl to get vaccinated in time. The best age is around 12 or 13 years old, as most girls that age are not sexually active yet, so they have not had an HPV infection. There are many misunderstandings, but take it from me: this vaccination is as safe as any other vaccination.”*



# Questions

## I have already had sex. Will the vaccination still work?

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The best thing is to get the vaccinations before you are sexually active. HPV is transmitted through sex. But even if you have already had sex, it is still a good idea to get vaccinated.

It is very unlikely that you have already had both variants of the virus at a young age.



## Does it help to use a condom?

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Condoms provide effective protection against most sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but sadly do not work completely to prevent HPV. This is because you can also get HPV from skin-to-skin contact in the genital region.

## What should I do if I do not want to get the vaccination?

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You are not required to do anything. You can just throw the invitation away. However, you will receive a reminder one more time. You can throw that one in the bin as well if you decide not to participate.

## Do I need permission from my parents?



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If you are 12 years of age or older, you can decide yourself if you want the vaccination or not. However, it is better to discuss it at home and reach a joint decision. When you get vaccinated, your parents do not need to be present.

## Have any girls died because of the vaccination?

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No, no one has ever died from an HPV vaccination. Not in the Netherlands, and not in any other countries either.

## Is the injection painful?

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Injections may be scary or unpleasant to you. There is nothing we can do about that. You will get the jab in your upper arm. It will only take a moment. Your arm may sometimes be stiff or painful after the vaccination. This will disappear spontaneously. You can take a paracetamol if you need to.

## Can I get the HPV vaccinations in a few years?



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Preferably not. It is important for you to get these vaccinations before you are sexually active.

## Are there any long-term side-effects?

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Over the past 10 years, the health of HPV-vaccinated girls has been monitored carefully. No long-term side-effects have been found, nor are there indications that we can expect them to show up. The stories on the internet about serious and permanent side-effects are not true.

## Does the HPV vaccination really help prevent cervical cancer?

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Research has shown that the vaccination will protect you against a minimum of 70% of all types of cervical cancer. You can find more information about this at [rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/hpv](http://rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/hpv).

## Is it possible to develop chronic fatigue from the vaccination?

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No. Long-term fatigue does occur sometimes in adolescents and young adults. Research has shown that it occurs equally often in vaccinated and in non-vaccinated girls.

# Are you experiencing a side-effect?

Report the side-effect to the Lareb Pharmacovigilance Centre.  
[www.lareb.nl](http://www.lareb.nl).

## Read the information leaflet

Check [rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/bijsluiters](http://rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/bijsluiters) for the information leaflet about the HPV vaccination. You can read more about the vaccine there. You can also ask the doctor or nurse who gives you the vaccination for the information leaflet.

Published by:

**National Institute for Public Health  
and the Environment, RIVM**

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January 2020

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