

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 provides protection against HPV infection, which is the most common cause of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is the 10th most common cancer and 9th most common cause of cancer deaths among women in Singapore. In Singapore, HPV vaccine is recommended for females aged 9 to 26 years old under the National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS) and the National Adult Immunisation Schedule (NAIS).

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 three types of HPV vaccines available in Singapore.

Cervarix is currently the HPV vaccine used for the school-based programme.

In addition to Cervarix, Gardasil and Gardasil 9 are also available in Singapore.

4. What is the difference between Cervarix, Gardasil, and Gardasil 9?

Cervarix and Gardasil provide comparable protection against HPV types 16 and 18, which account for 70% of all cervical cancer cases. While Gardasil extends protection against HPV types 6 and 11, these HPV types do not cause cervical cancer.

Cervarix was selected for the programme following an assessment which included considerations on efficacy, price and stock availability. Gardasil 9 is currently not included within the NAIS and NCIS.

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) Below 15 years old – Two doses are required.

Dose 1 is given in Secondary 1 and Dose 2 is given when your daughter/ward is in secondary 2.

- ii) 15 years old or above – Three doses are required.

Dose 1 and Dose 2 are given in Secondary 1 (with a minimum interval of 1 month between the two doses). Dose 3 is given when your daughter/ward is in secondary 2.

Your child will be given an appointment at a designated clinic to receive Dose 2.

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

The Health Promotion Board's (HPB's) School 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 HPB_mailbox@hpb.gov.sg or call 6435 3895.