

HPV

What you need to know about Human Papillomavirus & Vaccination

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of more than 200 related viruses, with some types leading to genital warts or cancer. [1] HPV infection is a key factor in the development of cervical cancer and is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections globally.

Every year, around 10,702 women in South Africa are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 5,870 lose their lives to the disease. It's the second most common cancer in women overall and the leading cancer in women aged 15 to 44 in the country.[2]

How Do You Get HPV? [3]

HPV spreads through skin-to-skin contact, primarily during sexual activity, including:

- Vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- Close genital contact

Even if symptoms aren't visible, the virus can still be passed from person to person. It's important to note that HPV can affect anyone who is sexually active, and using condoms can reduce but not completely prevent the risk of transmission.



Is there a cure? [3]

Currently, there is no cure for HPV. Most HPV infections go away on their own, but some can lead to serious health issues, such as cervical cancer and genital warts.



Who can get vaccinated? [4]

According to South African guidelines, the HPV vaccine is recommended for girls in Grade 4 (aged 9 and above) through the Department of Health's free school-based vaccination program. Boys can also be vaccinated, which is important as HPV affects them too, potentially leading to cancers like anal, penile, and oral cancers. For individuals outside government schools, vaccination can be accessed through private healthcare providers.

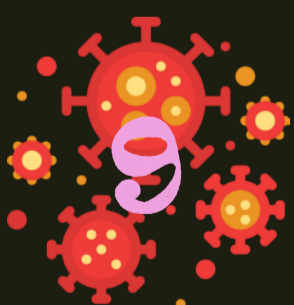


HPV vaccination works by building immunity through a series of shots designed to protect against the human papillomavirus. [5]

- For ages 9 to 15: Two doses are required, administered six months apart.
- For ages 15 and older: Three doses are recommended to ensure full protection.
- It's best to start vaccination at age 9 and complete it before becoming sexually active, although it can be given up to age 26.

This vaccination strategy is crucial in preventing HPV-related diseases, including various cancers and genital warts.

What does the HPV vaccine protect against [5]



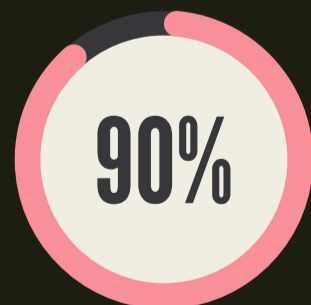
The 9 strains of HPV that cause most cases of cancer



Mouth, throat and genital cancers in men and women



90% of cases of cervical cancer



90% of cases of genital warts

Prevention is powerful—Protect your future with the HPV vaccine today!

References
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Human papillomavirus (HPV). CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/hpv>
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4. National Department of Health, South Africa. (2021). HPV vaccination programme: Protecting our children. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.za>
5. World Health Organization. (2022). Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines: WHO position paper. Weekly Epidemiological Record, 97(29), 337-359. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/weekly-epidemiological-record-no-29-2022>