



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

# *Protection against HPV For boys and girls*

National Immunisation Programme





# *One vaccine, protection against six types of cancer*

*The HPV vaccine offers effective protection against six types of cancer. Girls have received the vaccine since 2010. As of 2022, boys also have the chance to protect themselves against cancers caused by HPV. The vaccinations are part of the National Immunisation Programme.*



## What is HPV?

HPV is the abbreviation for human papillomavirus. This virus usually does not cause any symptoms, but it is very easy to pass on. That means someone who has HPV can accidentally infect someone else. There are different types of HPV infections. Type 16 and type 18 are the most dangerous, because these types cause cancer the most often. The most common form is cervical cancer.

HPV can also cause cancer in other parts of the body – the mouth, throat, vagina, labia, penis and anus. HPV is very common. Eight out of ten people will be infected with HPV one or more times in their lives. Luckily, not all of them will become ill. In almost all cases, your body will get rid of the virus all on its own. But sometimes the virus does not go away completely. In those cases, you could develop cancer 10 to 15 years later. It is estimated that 1,100 women and 400 men develop cancer as a result of HPV each year.

## Vaccination offers effective protection

Vaccination will protect you against the two most dangerous types of HPV. The vaccination is most effective if you get it before you are infected with the virus.

Two injections will be enough to protect you for a longer period of time. There is a period of six months between the first and second injections.

Girls in the Netherlands have now been receiving the HPV vaccine for over 10 years. This has allowed RIVM to carry out extensive research, which shows that vaccination offers between 80% protection against long-term infection with HPV type 16 and 95% protection against HPV type 18. By getting vaccinated yourself, you also help to protect others against HPV.

## Boys can now get the vaccine too

Boys can get infected with HPV just like girls. At a later age, boys can then develop cancer of the mouth, throat, penis or anus.

That is why boys can now also get vaccinated. The vaccine will protect them against HPV and significantly reduce their future risk of cancers caused by HPV.





## The vaccine is safe

In the Netherlands, over a million girls and boys have now been fully vaccinated against HPV. No serious side effects are known. There might be a little pain at the injection site, or sore muscles in that arm. Occasionally, people have a stomach ache, nausea, headache or fever. All of this passes within one to three days. Serious and chronic side effects have never been found.

Some parents worry that their child could develop chronic fatigue after vaccination. Media reports suggesting this have appeared in the past.

However, it is now known that girls who have had the HPV vaccine do not experience chronic fatigue any more often than unvaccinated girls. This has become clear from research carried out in the Netherlands, the UK and Norway.

If you would like to know exactly what is in the vaccine, go to the website of the National Immunisation Programme. The patient information leaflet is available at [rvp.nl/hpv](https://rvp.nl/hpv).



## Getting protected early on

The vaccination is most effective if you get it before you are infected with the virus. Research shows that the vaccine offers protection for many years. This means vaccination can be done at a young age. As of 2022, girls and boys are invited to get the vaccine in the year they turn 10 years old. At that age, it is very likely there has been no infection yet.

## Protection against cancers caused by HPV

Infection with HPV can happen during sexual activity. The virus then spreads via the hands, mouth, skin and mucous membranes. The body is usually able to get rid of the virus on its own. But when it cannot, there is an opportunity for the virus to change healthy cells. If the virus damages a lot of cells, the abnormal cells may later develop into cancer. This can be as long as 10 to 15 years later.

When you have had the HPV vaccine, your body will make antibodies that attack the virus if you get infected. The antibodies can recognise the virus and get rid of it. This means the virus cannot damage healthy cells.



*‘Every week, I deal with patients with cancer of the penis who wish they could travel back in time to get the vaccine and save themselves a great deal of misery.’*

Oscar Brouwer, urologist at the Netherlands Cancer Institute

*‘I start conversations with parents and can reassure them that the HPV vaccine has only one goal – to protect boys and girls against cancer.’*

Güven Yıldız,  
general practitioner in  
The Hague



*‘I got vaccinated to prevent cancer. My parents agreed it was a good idea.’*

Lisa, age 13



# One vaccine, protection against six types of cancer

## What is HPV?

HPV is short for human papillomavirus. This is a very contagious virus that can cause cancer several years later.



## Six types of cancer

HPV infection can lead to cancer of the mouth, throat, penis, anus, vagina, labia and cervix.

## A safe vaccine

Over a million girls and boys in the Netherlands have now been fully vaccinated against HPV. No serious side effects have been found.



## 95% protection

Research has shown that the HPV vaccine gives between 80% protection against long-term infection with HPV type 16 and 95% protection against HPV type 18.



## 80% of people in the Netherlands will get HPV

Eight out of ten people will get infected with HPV. The body is usually able to get rid of the virus on its own.

## For boys and girls from the age of nine

In the year boys and girls turn 10 years old, they will receive an invitation to get vaccinated against HPV.



# Questions



## Can you get vaccinated when you are ill?

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If you have a fever of over 38.5 degrees Celsius or are pregnant, it is better to wait to be vaccinated. Ask your GP or a Child and Youth Health Services doctor when you can get vaccinated.

## Can the vaccine cause infertility?

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No. The vaccine does not contain anything that affects the reproductive organs. This means it cannot affect whether you can get pregnant later. All the vaccine does is help your body to recognise and get rid of the virus.

## Do I need to pay for the HPV vaccine?

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HPV vaccinations are free.

## Is it worth getting the vaccine if I have already had sex?

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Yes. Vaccination offers benefits even if you are already sexually active. There is a good chance you have not been infected yet. The vaccine gives the best protection if you get it before you have had sex.

## How do people get infected with HPV?

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Infection occurs during sexual activity with someone who has the virus. HPV is then passed on via the hands, skin and mouth. HPV is very common and does not cause symptoms right away. This means the person you are with might not know that they carry the virus. The virus could then be passed on to you.

## Is it worth getting the vaccine if I am on the pill?

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Yes. The birth control pill protects against pregnancy, not against HPV. The pill does not affect how well the vaccine works.



## Vaccination data

RIVM, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, coordinates the Dutch National Immunisation Programme. RIVM gives parents information about the vaccinations and sends the invitations to get the vaccinations. The National Immunisation Programme is carried out by local Child and Youth Health Services (JGZ) centres, who give the vaccinations.

When your child has had a vaccination, JGZ will record the vaccination in its system and on your child's vaccination certificate. If you agree to this, JGZ will share your child's data with RIVM. This involves the vaccination details and personal data about your child. The JGZ doctor or nurse will ask you if you agree to this data being shared between JGZ and RIVM.

Your consent is important. To be able to do its work properly, RIVM needs to know exactly which vaccinations your child has received. For example, RIVM will use the data to send you a reminder about your child's vaccinations at the right time. The data also makes it possible for RIVM to send you a copy of your child's vaccination certificate when you ask for one.

RIVM also uses the data to monitor the quality of the National Immunisation Programme and the vaccines. And finally, RIVM will use the data to check how many children in the Netherlands have had all their vaccinations. If there is an outbreak of an infectious disease, it is very important to know how many people are protected. This allows RIVM to determine whether the disease could spread and whether steps need to be taken.

For more information (in Dutch), please go to [rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/jouw-toestemming](https://rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/jouw-toestemming)

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