

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is now available in Scotland from sexual health and HIV clinics to MSM who are up to and including 45 years of age.

The vaccine will help prevent HPV infection, which can cause genital warts and certain types of cancer. It's especially important for those who are living with HIV, and those who have more than one sexual partner.

Please ask your sexual health doctor or nurse about other vaccines recommended for all MSM that help protect against Hepatitis A and B infections.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:



☎ 0131 314 5300

✉ nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net



The HPV vaccine for men who have sex with men (MSM)

Help protect yourself against cancer and genital warts caused by HPV

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What is HPV and what diseases can it cause?

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is very common and you can catch it through intimate sexual contact with another person who already has it. There are over 200 types of HPV. Because it's so common, most people will get infected at some point in their life. People are often infected without knowing it as there are usually no symptoms and infections tend to go away on their own.

HPV infections that persist can lead to cancers – anal, throat and penile (penis) cancers in men, and cervical cancer in women. Other types of HPV infection can cause genital warts.

How is HPV infection spread?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the UK. HPV is spread mainly by skin-to-skin contact, not just anal and vaginal sex. Genital HPV infections are highly contagious and usually associated with sexual contact. Nearly all sexually active people get infected with HPV at some point in their lives. The risk increases with the number of sexual partners you and/or your partners have.


Can HPV infection be prevented?

Condoms do not guarantee protection from infection. This is because HPV can be transmitted by skin contact with areas not covered by condoms.

One of the best ways to protect yourself from HPV infection is to get the vaccine.

The vaccine is now offered to MSM attending sexual health and HIV clinics across Scotland. It protects against four types of HPV (types 6, 11, 16 and 18) that can cause cancer and genital warts.

The vaccine is a course of three injections over 4 to 12 months if you are 15 to 45 years old. Those under the age of 15 only need two doses (six months apart).



1st dose	— / — / —
2nd dose at least one month after the first dose	— / — / —
3rd dose at least three months after the second dose and ideally within 12 months of the first dose	— / — / —

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To get the best protection, it's important you get all three doses.

The card above is for you to take out and record your three immunisations.

Why should MSM attending sexual health and HIV clinics be immunised?

MSM attending sexual health and HIV

clinics are known to have a higher risk of HPV infection and disease.

The risk of anal cancer in MSM is higher than in heterosexual men. This is because MSM are not getting the protection that heterosexual men are getting from the girls' immunisation programme operating in Scotland since 2008. If you are living with HIV, this risk is higher again.

HPV immunisation is a very effective way to reduce your risk of genital warts and your risk of developing cancer caused by HPV.

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine meets the safety standards required for it to be used in the UK and other European countries.

It has been given safely to tens of millions of people worldwide, and used in Scotland since 2012.

Does it have any side effects?

The most common side effects are soreness, swelling and redness at the site of the injection. This is similar to other vaccines. More serious side effects are rare. If you feel unwell at any time after getting immunised, you should contact your GP or the clinic where you got the vaccine.

How do I get the vaccine?

Please ask your sexual health doctor or nurse for more details.

For more information on the vaccine and possible side effects visit: immunisationscotland.org.uk/hpvmmsm