

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Public Health – Factsheet

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health that has, over the past 50 years, led to the elimination, containment and control of diseases that were once very common in Canada.¹ Vaccines help your immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV can infect many parts of the body and is the most common sexually transmitted infection, affecting 80 per cent of the population at some point in their lives. Approximately 90 per cent of all HPV infections go away without treatment within two years. For some people, however, HPV causes cells within the body to change, which can lead to cancer.

Cancers that are caused by HPV often have no symptoms until they are quite advanced. **In Manitoba each year, approximately:**

- 1,500 people reportedly get non-cancerous genital warts
- 50 females are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and about 20 die from it
- 23 people are diagnosed with anal cancer
- 15 males are diagnosed with penile cancer

For these reasons, it is important to get immunized against HPV.

How is HPV spread?

Anyone, female or male, who has direct skin-to-skin sexual contact or oral sex with an infected person can get HPV. **Symptoms do NOT have to be visible for HPV to spread.**

Using condoms may lower the risk of getting HPV and developing HPV-related diseases (ex: genital warts and cervical cancer). To be most effective, condoms must be used with every sexual encounter, from start to finish. However, HPV can infect areas of the body that are not covered by a condom; therefore, condoms may not fully protect against HPV.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine protects against nine types of HPV (types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52, 58). When the vaccine is given *before* exposure to the virus, it is very effective in preventing infection from the most common types of HPV, which cause approximately:

- 90 per cent of all cervical cancers and precancerous cervical lesions
- 90 per cent of all anal cancers
- 90 per cent of all genital warts
- 60 per cent of all penile cancers
- other genital cancers
- cancers of the head and neck

The HPV vaccine is given as a series of two or three injections (needles) over a few months. The number of doses required depends on your age and medical history. It is very important to get all injections in the series.

The HPV vaccine does NOT protect against all types of HPV that cause cancer. You should continue to see a health care provider for regular health examinations.

Why should I get the HPV vaccine?

Immunization is the best way to protect yourself against HPV infections, which can be serious and sometimes fatal.

Vaccines help prepare the body to fight potential future exposure to the virus by getting the immune system ready.

HPV may have no signs or symptoms, so it is easy for people who are infected to pass it on to others without even knowing it. For this reason, it is very important to get immunized *before* you come into contact with the virus.

¹ The Public Health Agency of Canada

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine works best when it is given *before* exposure to the virus.

The HPV vaccine is routinely offered free-of-charge as part of Manitoba's School Immunization Program to all children in grade 6.

Unimmunized females born during or after 1997, and males born during or after 2002, are also eligible to receive the HPV vaccine series free-of-charge.

Additionally, some individuals are at increased risk of HPV and can also get immunized free-of-charge, including:

- immunocompetent HIV-infected males nine to 26 years of age and females nine to 45 years of age
- males who are 18 years of age and younger who are, or who have ever been, incarcerated.
- individuals who are, or who have previously been diagnosed with recurrent respiratory papillomatosis (RRP)
- males nine to 26 years of age and females nine to 45 years of age who have congenital or acquired immune deficiencies.
- patients under the care of a haematologist or oncologist from CancerCare Manitoba
- males nine to 26 years of age who identify as gay or bisexual
- transgender males and transgender females nine to 26 years of age
- females nine to 45 years of age who have certain newly diagnosed high-grade abnormal cervical/pap smear results.
- males nine to 26 years of age and females nine to 45 years of age who are victims of sexual assault.

Speak with your health care provider to see if you are eligible to receive the HPV vaccine free-of-charge as part of the recommended immunization schedule.

Or visit:

The Manitoba Public Health website:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/vaccineeligibility.html

Who should NOT get the HPV vaccine?

Anyone under the age of nine.

Pregnant women are advised to defer vaccination until after pregnancy. The HPV vaccine may be administered to women who are breastfeeding.

If you have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine or to any of the contents of the HPV vaccine, you should speak with your health care provider.

For specific details about the vaccine's ingredients, please visit the vaccine manufacturer's product monograph (link provided below) or speak with your health care provider.

There is no need to delay immunization because of a cold or mild illness. However, if you are concerned, speak with a health care provider.

Possible side-effects of the HPV vaccine

It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get HPV. Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of quality and safety.

Common reactions to the HPV vaccine include soreness, redness, pain or swelling where the vaccine was given. Some individuals may have fever, drowsiness, dizziness, or an upset stomach. Acetaminophen (ex. Tylenol®) can be given for fever or soreness. If you are concerned about your reaction to the vaccine, speak with a health care provider.

Acetylsalicylic acid-ASA (ex. Aspirin) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting a vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction. This can include hives, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. Should any severe allergic reaction occur, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department or health centre.

Report any serious or unexpected side-effects to a health care provider.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Your record of protection

Make sure your immunization provider updates your immunization record card or that of your child(ren), after you receive an immunization. Keep the card in a safe place!

All immunizations administered are recorded on an individual's immunization record in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- allows health care providers to find out which immunizations you have had or need to have
- may be used to produce immunization records or notify you or your health care provider if a particular immunization has been missed
- allows Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living and public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information. You can have your personal health information hidden from view from health care providers. For more information, please contact your local public health office or speak with your health care provider.

If you need information on the immunizations that you or your child(ren) have received, contact your health care provider. Contact your local public health office for a copy of your or your child(ren)'s immunization records.

For a listing of public health offices, visit: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html.

For more information on HPV or the HPV vaccine:

Talk to your health care provider.

Call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257.

Or, visit:

Manitoba's Immunization Program website:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/index.html

Government of Canada website:

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/immunization-vaccines.html

CancerCare Manitoba website:

www.cancercare.mb.ca

Canadian Cancer Society website:

www.cancer.ca/en/?region=mb

HPV Vaccine Product Monograph:

pdf.hres.ca/dpd_pm/00037408.PDF

Please visit the Vaccine Factsheets and Resources web page for the most current version:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html