

# HPV VACCINATION TOOLKIT

for health promoters and  
community advocates

Reviewed & updated, December 2023

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This toolkit is to support kōrero with caregivers and rangatahi about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. It's designed for health promoters and other community advocates.

We encourage you to use this toolkit to support kōrero and information sharing with your community about the HPV vaccine. This free vaccine protects our tamariki from cancers caused by the HPV virus.

The Covid-19 pandemic severely disrupted the school-based HPV immunisation programme and many thousands of tamariki have missed out. But we can take action to ensure young people are not harmed by preventable HPV-related cancers.

The HPV vaccine can protect our tamariki from six types of cancer in later life: throat, cervical, vulval, vaginal, penile, and anal cancers.

Vaccination is FREE for people aged 26 and under. The best age to get it is 11-12 years (Year 8 students) through the school-based immunisation programme. Most, but not all schools participate in this programme.

Young people who missed out at school can get the free HPV vaccine at their GP, Family Planning, and local pharmacy up until their 27th birthday.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are 4 actions you can take to ensure our young people are protected from HPV-related cancers

## **01** Have a kōrero about HPV vaccination

Have a conversation with friends, whānau, youth and other community members about the free HPV vaccine. It is one of the most important ways you can spread awareness and advocate. See FAQs on page 11 for answers to some of the most common questions asked.

## **02** Spread the word

We've developed resources that could help you engage with people on social media. Contacting local media about this important topic is also a good way to engage with a local audience. See our social media resources on page 9 and 'Information on the HPV vaccination programme in Aotearoa' on pages 17-19.



## **03** **Raise awareness through your local school or kura**

Talk to your local kura about adding messages in their newsletters that remind caregivers and rangatahi about the free HPV vaccine (offered through the school programme OR at their local doctor). See key messages on pages 7-8 and resources on pages 9-10.

## **04** **Identify a community champion**

Build your connections with trusted community members and inspire action to protect our children from HPV-cancers. With your support, they may provide information, inspire young people to get vaccinated, and make further links with groups and networks who may want to be involved.

HPV vaccination  
protects our  
tamariki from six  
types of cancer  
in later life. Its  
safe, effective  
and very long-  
lasting



# KEY MESSAGES

You can use these key messages to get the word out

## For parents and whānau:

- It's easy to protect your tamariki from 6 types of cancer with the HPV vaccine.
- The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, long-lasting and it's FREE.
- It's recommended that all tamariki get the HPV vaccine when they are 11-12 years old (Year 8). Look out for the consent form in their school bags.
- If you're not sure if your tamariki has had their HPV vaccine just ask your whānau nurse or doctor.
- If your tamariki missed out on getting their HPV vaccination at school or kura – it's not too late, you can get it FREE from your whānau doctor or local pharmacy.
- For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.cancer.org.nz/cancer/reduce-your-risk-of-cancer/hpv-vaccination/>



# KEY MESSAGES

You can use these key messages to get the word out

## For rangatahi:

- The HPV vax protects you from 6 types of cancer caused by the HPV virus.
- The HPV vax is safe, effective, long-lasting and it's FREE to get.
- Year 8 students can get HPV vaxxed at school or kura during school time.
- If you missed out on getting your HPV vax in Year 8 – it's all good, you can still get it FREE from your whānau doctor or local pharmacy.
- Check out <https://www.cancer.org.nz/cancer/reduce-your-risk-of-cancer/hpv-vaccination/> for more info or kōrero to the school nurse or medical centre.



# RESOURCES

## Social media materials



Did your tamariki miss out on getting their HPV vaccine at school?  
It's free from your whānau doctor or medical centre.



All tamariki should get the HPV vaccine in Year 8.



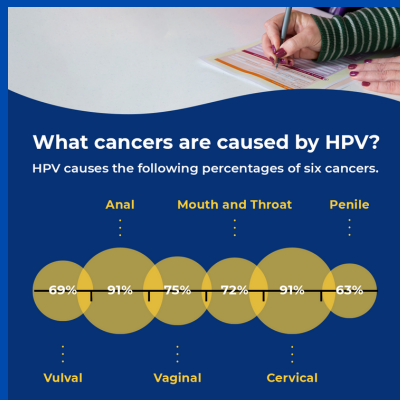
The HPV vaccination protects your tamariki from six types of cancer.



The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, long-lasting and free.



Not sure if your tamariki has had their HPV vaccine?  
Just ask your whānau doctor or nurse.



[Download social media resources](#)



# RESOURCES

## Video



[Share YouTube video](#)

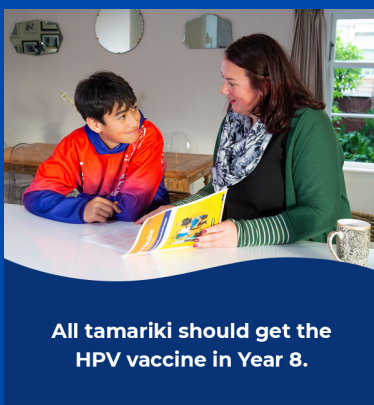
## Content for electronic newsletters

Vaccination against HPV protects from 6 different types of cancer caused by the HPV virus

HPV is a common virus that can cause cancers later in life. Tamariki can be protected from these cancers with the HPV vaccine at 11-12 years old. The HPV vaccine is for all genders.

Its FREE, safe, effective and long-lasting.

The HPV vaccine is part of the school-based immunisation programme and offered in Year 8. A consent form will be sent home to be signed by a caregiver and returned. Your child will receive the vaccine at school along with their peers.



[Link to images](#)

# FAQ

## Common questions you may get from parents and rangatahi

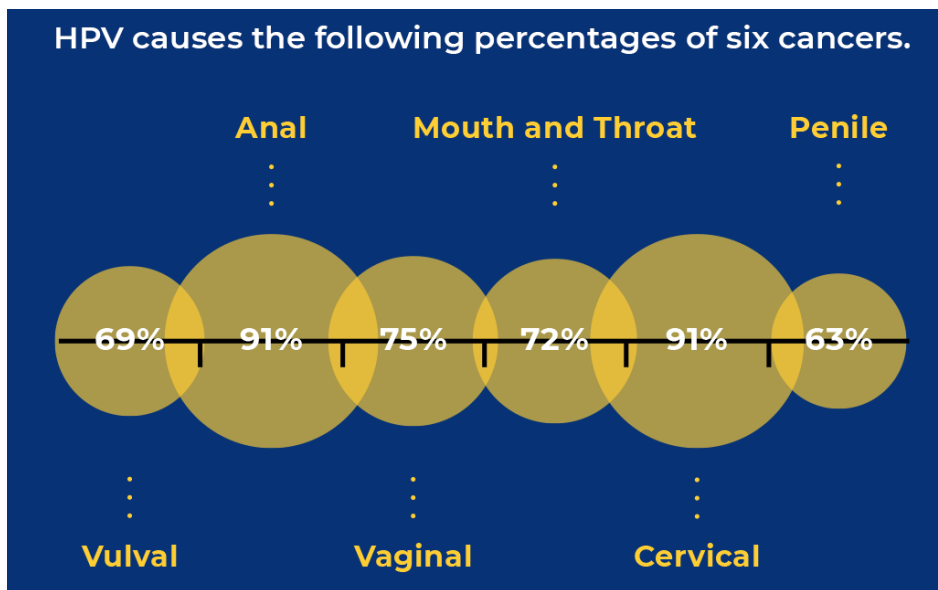
### What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common group of viruses that can cause 6 types of cancer. The vaccine protects against infection with HPV.

HPV is spread by intimate skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. Without vaccination, nearly all adults will have an HPV infection in their lifetime. For most people, the body clears the infection on its own and it will not cause any symptoms or health problems. For about 1 in 10 people infected, the infection does not go away by itself and may develop into cancers of the vulva, vagina, cervix, penis, or anus years later. It can also cause cancers of the throat.

Most people do not know that they have an HPV infection. There is no treatment but vaccination can prevent infection.

### Cancers caused by the HPV virus



# FAQ

## How can rangatahi be protected against HPV-cancers?

There is a vaccine that can prevent it.

Protection provided by HPV immunisation is long-term.

If the HPV vaccine is offered at your child's school, a [consent form](#) will be sent home for caregivers to sign. This needs to be signed and returned to school. Your child will then be vaccinated at school along with their classmates.

If young people miss getting the HPV vaccine at school, they can get it free at their whānau doctor or local pharmacy between the ages of 9 to 26 years.

## Should all genders get the HPV vaccine?

Yes, it's important that all rangatahi are vaccinated. It is a common misconception that the vaccine solely protects against cervical cancer. In fact, the HPV vaccine is important for all genders as it protects against cancers of the throat, cervix, vagina and vulva, penis, and anus.

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

HPV vaccination is free for all aged between 9-26 years (up until their 27th birthday).



# FAQ

## When is the best time to get vaccinated?

The best time to get vaccinated is in the school-based immunisation programme in Year 8 (around 11-12 years old). This is when the vaccine works best by providing a better immune response. Tamariki create more antibodies (protection) against the virus than older age groups.

Everyone aged under 26 years is encouraged to have the HPV vaccine. Vaccination of young adults is not as effective as in children, but it will still offer good protection from new HPV infections. It does not treat existing infections.

## My child's school was closed during the COVID-19 pandemic and they missed out on being vaccinated. What should I do?

Check if your tamariki's school plan to hold an HPV vaccination event. If not, book an appointment for the free vaccine with your whānau doctor or ask at your local pharmacy.

It's important to remember that all tamariki aged 11-12 years should have the HPV vaccine and that two doses are required at least six months apart. It's best to have the vaccine as close to the recommended schedule or catch up as soon as possible.

# FAQ

## How can I check if my child has had the HPV vaccine or received all the required doses?

Caregivers or young people can check their vaccination status with their school nurse or whānau health centre.

For children aged 11-12 years: **two doses** of the HPV vaccine (Gardasil® 9) should be given 6 months apart. If they missed one or both doses, it's not too late. Get it as soon as possible so they can be protected.

**Three doses** of Gardasil® 9 are given over 6 months if aged over 15 years.

## How do we know the vaccine is safe?

The HPV vaccine is very safe. Scientists have tested and monitored the vaccine for many years. Millions of people worldwide have been vaccinated. The vaccine itself does not cause HPV infection.

Side effects are usually very mild and only last for a short time. The most common side-effects are:

- pain or swelling in the arm where the vaccine is given
- increased temperature, headache, or feeling tired
- dizziness, fainting or feeling sick

## Who shouldn't have the vaccine?

- People who have had a severe allergic reaction to yeast (an ingredient of the vaccine), or to a previous dose of the HPV vaccine.
- Pregnant people.

Speak to your whānau nurse or doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

# FAQ

## **If I'm an adult aged 27 or over should I get vaccinated?**

Adults should talk to their doctor, it may be right for them.

Some people who are not already vaccinated may decide to get the HPV vaccine after speaking with their doctor about their risk for new HPV infections and the possible benefits of vaccination.

Most sexually active adults have already been exposed to HPV, although not necessarily to all of the HPV types targeted by vaccination.

The vaccine is recommended, but not free for special groups, including immunocompromised people aged between 27-45 such as transplant recipients, people living with HIV or those on dialysis.

## **If I've had the HPV vaccine, will I still need to have regular cervical screening?**

Yes. Cervical cancer is caused by the HPV virus. People with a cervix aged 25 years and older should continue to have regular cervical screening, even if they have been vaccinated against HPV. Most, but not all, HPV types are targeted by vaccination.

In 2023, HPV primary screening was introduced. This means people with a cervix can choose to do their own vaginal swab; some may still need a cervical sample or smear. Most people will only need to be screened every 5 years instead of every 3 years.

# ABOUT THE HPV VACCINATION PROGRAMME IN AOTEAROA

## Information for health promoters

### Success of the HPV vaccination programme

Since the HPV vaccine was introduced in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2017 for boys and 2008 for girls, there has been substantial decreases in HPV infections and cervical pre-cancers. It is expected that in time, we will see significant reductions in other HPV-related cancers, as demonstrated in clinical trials and vaccinated populations overseas.

With sustained high and equitable coverage of adolescent HPV vaccine in Aotearoa, we can essentially eliminate HPV-related cancer. Australia is on track to eliminate cervical cancer because of high rates of vaccination coverage (over 80%) and screening.

Aotearoa New Zealand has signed up to the World Health Organization's goal to eliminate cervical cancer.

#### Further reading:

Drolet M, et al. [Population-level impact and herd effects following the introduction of human papillomavirus vaccination programmes: updated systematic review and meta-analysis](#). The Lancet. 2019/08/10/ 2019;394(10197):497-509.

Innes et al. (2020). [Impact of human papillomavirus vaccination on rates of abnormal cervical cytology and histology in young New Zealand women](#). New Zealand Medical Journal, 133(1508), 72–84.

Canfell K, et al. [Australia on-track to be the first country to achieve cervical cancer elimination](#). HPV World.

Giuliano AR, et al. [Efficacy of quadrivalent HPV vaccine against HPV infection and disease in males](#). New England Journal of Medicine. 2011;364:401-11.

World Health Organisation <https://www.who.int/initiatives/cervical-cancer-elimination-initiative>

# ABOUT THE HPV VACCINATION PROGRAMME IN AOTEAROA

## HPV immunisation coverage in Aotearoa

As at July 2023, about 56.7% of young people born in 2009 were fully vaccinated against HPV. Within the total coverage, rates for Maori decreased to 46.9%, and Pacific coverage increased to 50.6%.

The national target remains at 75%.

For more information, go to <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-the-health-sector/vaccine-information/hpv-immunisation-programme/>

## What motivates caregivers to vaccinate their children?

Parents are most likely to vaccinate their children when:

- A health worker/trusted source has a kōrero with them about the vaccine and recommends it for their children.
- They learn more about HPV immunisation, that it's safe, and protects tamariki against HPV-cancers.

Other motivating factors include: the convenience of the school-based programme and that it's free.

# ABOUT THE HPV VACCINATION PROGRAMME IN AOTEAROA

## Why some caregivers may be hesitant

There has been a rise in vaccination misinformation in Aotearoa and parents can be concerned about vaccine safety. Anti-immunisation groups have sent material to kura and this has made some families fearful. It's perfectly understandable that caregivers may be cautious about vaccines and their ingredients and seek further information. The HPV vaccine is very safe and effective.

Other barriers may include: the impact of COVID-19, low awareness of the vaccine, and inconvenience. The fact that HPV is spread by intimate activity is a particular concern for some people who view vaccination as encouraging promiscuity or believe their child is too young to be vaccinated. This is untrue. Sexual activity may be a long way off in our child's future, but age 11-12 is the most effective age to have the vaccine. Younger people create more antibodies to the vaccine and this is why they only need two doses instead of three. Having the vaccine now means children will be less likely to develop HPV-related cancers in the future.

## More information:

The Cancer Society: <https://www.cancer.org.nz/>

The New Zealand HPV Project: [hpv.org.nz](http://hpv.org.nz)

Te Whatu Ora: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-the-health-sector/vaccine-information/hpv-immunisation-programme/>

We thank you for your continued support  
in our efforts to prevent cancer.

## Contact

Cancer Society  
Te Kāhui Matepukupuku o Aotearoa  
PO Box 651  
Wellington 6140  
[www.cancer.org.nz](http://www.cancer.org.nz)  
[policy@cancer.org.nz](mailto:policy@cancer.org.nz)



**Cancer  
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku  
o Aotearoa