

# HPV Fact Sheet

## What is HPV?

- HPV stands for Human Papillomavirus, a super common virus that spreads through skin-to-skin contact, usually during intimate activities (like sexual contact).
  - Fact: about 80% of people will get HPV at some point – it's as common as a cold for your skin! Most infections clear up naturally.
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## How does HPV spread?

- HPV spreads through intimate skin contact (vaginal, anal, oral sex, or even non-penetrative contact).
  - It is not spread by casual contact like hugging, sharing food, or toilet seats.
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## What are the risks?

- Most cases have no symptoms, and your body clears the virus in 1-2 years.
  - Some cases can cause genital warts (treatable, not harmful) or, in rare cases, lead to cancers years later IF untreated (e.g., cervical, throat, anal, or penile cancer).
  - Key Stat: HPV causes 99% of cervical cancers, but vaccination prevents this.
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## How can you prevent HPV?

- The HPV vaccine (Gardasil) protects against 9 high-risk strains that cause warts and cancers.
  - When? Best received at age 12-13 (Year 8 in the UK), before any exposure. Available free via school or GP.
  - Effectiveness: over 90% effective at preventing HPV-related cancers.
  - Is the vaccine safe? Yes – side effects are mild (like a sore arm). Millions get it safely worldwide.
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- Screening is offered from age 25, cervical screening catches early changes for women.
  - Safe Practices: condoms reduce (but don't fully stop) HPV spread.

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## Fast facts:

- Boys and girls: both need the vaccine – HPV causes cancers in everyone (e.g., throat cancer in men).
- No symptoms? You can still have and spread HPV without knowing.
- Clearing It: your immune system usually fights HPV off in 1–2 years, but the vaccine prevents risky strains.

## What if you have questions?

- Talk to: school nurse, GP, or a trusted adult.
- Check Out:
- [NHS.uk/HPV](https://www.nhs.uk/HPV) (simple, reliable info).
  - [Brook.org.uk/topics/hpv](https://www.brook.org.uk/topics/hpv) (youth-friendly health advice).

## Call to action?

- Check your status: ask your parents or nurse if you've had the HPV vaccine (usually given in Year 8).
- Spread the word: share facts with friends to bust myths and normalise health chats.
- Stay proactive: vaccination + future screenings = strong protection for life.

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# Session outline and notes



**Q** - True or False: Getting the HPV vaccine means you don't need regular health screenings like cervical smears later in life.

**A** - False. Vaccination is key, but screenings catch any issues early. NHS guidance stresses combining both for full protection.

## 5. Conclusion and takeaways (5 minutes)

### Key messages recap:


- HPV is common but preventable – get vaccinated!
- Talk about it: asking questions reduces fear and embarrassment.

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South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw

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