

Gay and bisexual men and those aged 15 and over to receive 2 doses of HPV vaccine

News story

From today, gay and bisexual men and those aged 15 and over only need to receive 2 doses of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine – instead of 3 – to be fully vaccinated.



This HPV vaccine update is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

People with HIV or who are known to be immunocompromised will continue to receive 3 doses.

The vaccine helps to prevent HPV infection which can cause genital warts and HPV-associated cancers, such as cervical cancer, some other cancers of the genital areas and anus, along with some cancers of the head and neck.

Those who are eligible for the HPV vaccine can get it free on the NHS up until their 25th birthday.

There is also a HPV vaccination programme for gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) up to 45 years of age, who attend sexual health or HIV clinics.

The routine adolescent HPV vaccination programme that is offered to 12 to 13 year olds in school has been following a 2-dose schedule since September 2014.

In May 2020 the JCVI, who regularly review all vaccination programmes, advised that the 2-dose schedule could be extended to adults as the evidence showed 2 doses offers good protection in older individuals. The 2 doses should be given at least 6 months apart.

The JCVI also advised that the 3-dose schedule should continue to be offered

to eligible individuals living with HIV or known to be immunocompromised at the time of vaccination.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant Epidemiologist at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

It is great news that from today almost all those eligible for the HPV vaccine will need just 2 doses to be fully vaccinated. This has already been the case for several years for 12 and 13 year olds but now the evidence is clear that 2 doses offers very good protection in all age groups.

We know that the HPV vaccine offers excellent protection against HPV infections and some cancers in men and women and we urge everyone who is eligible to get this potentially life-saving vaccine when it is offered.

It also remains important for all women to attend their cervical screening appointment when they are invited as this can detect if you are at risk of cancer and save lives.

These changes come into effect from today.

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