

Human Papillomavirus

Everything you need to know
about HPV



Fernandez

Built for Birthing

What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a widespread virus transmitted through direct skin-to-skin contact, most often during sexual activity. Nearly all sexually active individuals will encounter HPV at some point, though many remain unaware of the infection. It is most commonly contracted during the late teens and early 20s.

While there are numerous strains of HPV, most cause no symptoms and clear up on their own. However, certain types can lead to cervical cancer in women, as well as other less common cancers such as those of the anus, penis, vagina, vulva, and oropharynx (the back of the throat, including the base of the tongue and tonsils). Some HPV strains also cause genital warts, which, though not life-threatening, can be emotionally distressing and uncomfortable to treat.

Why are HPV vaccines important?

HPV vaccines are designed to target the strains most commonly linked to cervical cancer. One of the two available vaccines also offers protection against genital warts caused by certain HPV types. Both vaccines are highly effective at preventing infection from the specific strains they cover, offering strong protection against HPV-related diseases.

What is the recommended HPV vaccination schedule for women after childbirth?

- If you are 26 years old or younger, you can receive either the quadrivalent or nine-valent vaccine following a 3-dose schedule (at 0, 2, and 6 months).
- If you are over 26 years old, the quadrivalent vaccine is recommended, also administered in a 3-dose schedule (at 0, 2, and 6 months).
- For personalised guidance and complete recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider.

Are HPV vaccines effective in a sexually active person?

While the vaccines are most effective when given before any sexual activity and exposure to HPV, it can still lower the risk of contracting HPV for those who are already sexually active. Even if you have been exposed to one or more HPV types, the vaccines can protect you against other strains you have not yet encountered. Research shows that only 0.4% of women are exposed to the four most common HPV types (6, 11, 16, and 18), meaning 99.6% of sexually active women may still benefit from vaccination.

Can a woman who is breastfeeding receive HPV vaccination?

Yes, women who are breastfeeding can safely receive the HPV vaccine. There is no evidence of serious adverse effects in breastfeeding infants whose mothers were vaccinated. However, for personalised advice and a complete recommendation, it is always best to consult your doctor.

Should girls and women be screened for cervical cancer before getting vaccinated?

Girls and women do not need to undergo a HPV or a Pap Smear test to determine if they should receive the vaccine. However, it is crucial for women to continue regular cervical cancer screenings, even after completing the full HPV vaccination series. Married women over the age of 25 should have a Pap test before getting vaccinated. For personalised advice, consult your healthcare provider.

How long does vaccine protection last?

Vaccine protection has been shown to last at least ten years without any evidence of declining immunity. Ongoing studies continue to evaluate the long-term duration of protection. At this time, booster doses are not recommended.

Do the vaccines protect against all HPV types?

The vaccines do not protect against all types of HPV. They are ineffective in preventing about 30% of cervical cancers. Therefore, it is essential for women to continue regular cervical cancer screenings (such as Pap tests) even after receiving the HPV vaccine.

How safe are the vaccines?

The HPV vaccines have been licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as both safe and effective. Mild side effects, such as pain at the injection site, fever, dizziness, and nausea, have been reported. However, these reactions are generally short-lived and not serious.



Are the HPV vaccines safe for pregnant women?

The HPV vaccines are not recommended for pregnant women, as the data on the safety of HPV vaccination during pregnancy is limited. However, if you find out that you are pregnant or have conceived around the time of vaccination, any further HPV vaccination should be postponed.

There is no need to terminate the pregnancy if the vaccine was given unintentionally. According to FOGSI recommendations, the HPV vaccination series can be completed six weeks after delivery.

In what other ways can I prevent cervical cancer?

To help prevent cervical cancer, regular screenings like Pap Smear test are crucial, as they can detect abnormal cervical cells before they turn into cancer. HPV tests may also be used alongside Pap Smear test in certain cases. Using condoms and limiting the number of sexual partners can reduce the risk of HPV infection. Early detection and follow-up are key in preventing most cervical cancer cases.



Want to know more about the HPV vaccine?

Our vaccination counsellor is here to answer your queries. You can reach her at **+91 91001 04155**.

The HPV vaccine is available at all our locations.
Get informed, and stay protected!