

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine

Changes under the National Immunisation Program
in 2023



FACT SHEET

From 6 February 2023, the dose schedule for the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine will change to a **single dose**, and eligibility for the catch-up program will be extended up to and including 25 years of age under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

Key points about the change to the program

- The HPV vaccine (Gardasil[®]9) is funded and primarily delivered through school immunisation programs to young people aged approximately 12 to 13 years. Catch-up vaccination is provided through immunisation clinics at schools or through a General Practitioner (GP), community pharmacy or other primary care providers.
- From 6 February 2023, the routine two dose HPV vaccine schedule provided to young people aged 12-13 years will become a **single dose** schedule using the same Gardasil[®]9 vaccine.
- The ongoing NIP funded catch-up program for young people who missed HPV vaccination has also been extended to include those up to and including 25 years of age (increased from 19 years of age).
- Young people (except those who are immunocompromised) who receive a single dose before 26 years of age are now considered fully vaccinated and will not need further doses. The Immunisation History Statement on the Australian Immunisation Register will reflect that an individual is up to date after receiving a single dose.
- The change is based on advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) who have considered the latest international scientific and clinical evidence.
- State and Territory health departments will be communicating the changes to parents of adolescents eligible for the HPV vaccine at school in 2023.

People who are immunocompromised

- There is no change to the dose schedule for people who are immunocompromised. They should still receive the recommended three doses of the HPV vaccine which are all funded under the NIP before 26 years of age. Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for more information on HPV vaccination for people who are immunocompromised.
- Given the routine scheduling of school immunisation programs, immunocompromised individuals may be referred to their GP, primary care provider or pharmacist immuniser to ensure the completion of all three doses.

Catch up vaccination

- If HPV vaccination has been missed, only one dose is now required before 26 years of age to be considered fully vaccinated (except for those who are immunocompromised).
- Catch-up vaccination should occur as soon as possible, however, people remain eligible for catch-up until they turn 26 years of age.
- If vaccination is provided through a GP or other primary care provider, then the vaccine is funded but there may be a consultation or administration fee applicable. Talk to your provider for more information.

The change is based on the latest evidence

- The program change is based on a large volume of evidence that has emerged in recent years. The Government's expert advisory group, ATAGI, has reviewed the international evidence and determined that a single dose gives comparable protection to two doses. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) has endorsed ATAGI's recommendations.
- ATAGI's recommendations are aligned with those of the World Health Organization Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) and the United Kingdom's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).
- In April 2022, [SAGE](#) evaluated the evidence and concluded that a single dose of HPV vaccine delivers comparable protection to multi-dose schedules in immunocompetent people¹. The [UK's JCVI](#) in February 2022 recommended shifting to a one dose vaccination schedule for the pre-adolescent school-based program, which they reaffirmed in a statement in August 2022². They anticipate implementing this schedule in the 2023–2024 school year.

Vaccination against HPV is important

- HPV is a common virus that is primarily spread through sexual contact. HPV infection can cause cancers and other conditions that lead to serious health consequences in people of all genders.
- The benefits of HPV vaccines are greatest when they are given before exposure to the virus. This underpins the implementation of vaccination to young people in early high school prior to their sexual debut.
- HPV vaccines are critical to eliminating cervical cancer. Almost all cervical cancers are linked to HPV infection. Vaccination also protects against genital warts and HPV related genital, anal and oropharyngeal cancers.
- Further, vaccination contributes to the elimination of cervical and other cancers in Australia by reducing HPV transmission to future sexual partners.
- HPV vaccination is not funded for people aged 26 years and over because HPV infection generally occurs soon after sexual activity commences. Vaccine effectiveness is reduced if there has been a prior infection.
- Some people aged 26 years and over may benefit from being vaccinated and should speak to their vaccination provider for advice related to their individual circumstances. If vaccination occurs from 26 years of age, three doses are recommended. Vaccines need to be purchased via private prescription for people aged 26 years and over, and costs may vary. Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for information on HPV vaccination for people who are aged 26 years and over.
- HPV vaccination doesn't protect against all types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer. Cervical screening tests for women and people with a cervix are recommended every 5 years between 25-74 years of age.

Where can I get more information?

- ✓ Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) which has been updated to provide the latest clinical advice and recommendations on HPV vaccination.
- ✓ Visit the [HPV vaccination page](#) on the Department of Health and Aged Care website.
- ✓ Contact your state or territory health department for further information.

¹ World Health Organization Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization. Meeting of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization. One-dose Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine offers solid protection against cervical cancer. Weekly Epidemiological Record April 2022.

² Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. JCVI statement on a one-dose schedule for the routine HPV immunisation programme (published 5 August 2022).