



NEWS

Boys in England to get HPV vaccine from next year

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BMJ

The government has given the go ahead for boys aged between 12 and 13 in England to be given the vaccine against the human papilloma virus (HPV) and aims to roll out vaccination next autumn.

The decision follows a recommendation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation last week to extend the current programme for girls to include boys.¹ A new modelling method showed that considering the wider issues of health economics—including the benefits of preventing cancer many years into the future—made such an extension cost effective.

The vaccine protects men from HPV related diseases—such as oral, throat, and anal cancer—and also helps reduce the overall number of cervical cancers in women, through herd immunity.

Around 20 countries already offer gender neutral HPV vaccination including Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, and the USA.

Until now only some men who have sex with men have been offered the vaccine in the UK in a scheme that started in April this year.

Public health minister Steve Brine said: “The HPV vaccine for girls is already expected to save hundreds of lives every year and I am delighted that we will now be protecting even more people from this devastating disease by extending the vaccines to boys.

“We are committed to leading a world class vaccination programme and achieving some of the best cancer outcomes in the world—I am confident these measures today will bring us one step further to achieving this goal.”

Mary Ramsay, head of immunisations at Public Health England, said: “This extended programme offers us the opportunity to make HPV related diseases a thing of the past and build on the success of the girls’ programme, which has already reduced the prevalence of HPV 16 and 18, the main cancer causing types, by over 80%. We can now be even more confident that we will reduce cervical and other cancers in both men and women in the future.”

1 Kmietowicz Z. Boys should be given HPV vaccine, says joint committee. *BMJ* 2018;362:k3163. 10.1136/bmj.k3163 30021775

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