

Dear Parent or Guardian

## Beating cervical cancer

### The HPV vaccine is now available to all girls in school year 8

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine that protects against cervical cancer is now available to all girls who are currently in year 8

By having this vaccination, your daughter will be protected against the commonest cause of cervical cancer for many years to come.

With this letter is a consent form, ethnicity category sheet and a leaflet about the vaccination. If you would like more details, you can order or download a Q and A sheet that should answer any questions you might have once you have read the leaflet. This is available on:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/hpv-human-papillomavirus-vaccine.aspx>

Here you can also find a scientific fact sheet on the virus, the disease and the vaccine, as well as links to other useful websites. You can also talk to the school nurse, your GP or practice nurse.

This vaccination consists of three doses. This course must be completed for full protection.

The months for the HPV vaccinations to be given at specific intervals are between:

1<sup>st</sup> Dose: **September to December**

2<sup>nd</sup> Dose: **October to December**

3<sup>rd</sup> Dose: **March to May**

**Please return the enclosed consent form to the school within 2 weeks of receipt.**

On the back of this letter, there is some basic introductory information about the virus and the vaccination, which we hope you find useful. This vaccination programme against cervical cancer gives us the opportunity to help prevent a very serious disease that affects over 3000 women every year in the UK and causes over 1000 deaths.

We hope that the information provided addresses any concerns you or your daughter might have about the vaccination and that you will both feel confident that by having the HPV vaccine she will be protecting herself and others from a very serious disease later in life.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Jones  
Senior Manager 0-19 Health Services CLCH

## **Beating cervical cancer – the new HPV vaccine**

### **What is cervical cancer?**

Cervical cancer affects the cervix (the entrance to the womb). It is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is spread from one person to another during sexual activity. There are over 100 types of HPV but only thirteen of these cause cervical cancer and just two – types 16 and 18 – cause over 70% of the cases.

### **What is the HPV vaccine?**

The HPV vaccine stops the human papillomavirus from developing in the body and so prevents cervical cancer (in 70% of the cases).

### **Why does the programme start at 12 or 13 years of age?**

The virus that causes cervical cancer is spread by someone having sex, or being sexually intimate with another person who has the virus. Both men and women can become infected with this virus. Whilst most girls don't start having sex until they are 16 or quite a bit older, it has been shown that the vaccine provides the best protection if it is given at 12 to 13 years of age. Because the virus is so common, and the vaccine won't work against the cancer-causing types 16 and 18 if they are already in the body, postponing the vaccination until after sexual activity has started would mean that a young woman may not be protected and could therefore become infected with the cancer-causing virus.

### **How will I know when my daughter is going to have the vaccination?**

You will be sent information and a consent form when the vaccination is going to be given at school. It is important that the consent form is signed and returned to the school before your daughter's vaccination is due. To get the best protection, she will need three injections over a period of six months. Girls not in education will be contacted by their PCT or GP surgery.

### **What if my daughter doesn't want to have the vaccination?**

She doesn't have to have it, if she doesn't want to. But it is recommended that she does have it for the reasons given above. Having the vaccination now will protect her for many years. Suggest she speaks to the nurse or doctor if she wants more information, on her own, or with you, if she'd prefer. Over 300,000 girls have already had the vaccination in the first year of the programme.

### **What if my daughter wants the vaccination but, as her parents, we'd rather she didn't have it?**

You should discuss this with your doctor or nurse to get more advice. The decision is legally hers as long as she understands the issues in giving consent but the nurse would much rather have your permission as well. It is important for your daughter's future to appreciate that having the vaccination now will protect her from the most common cause of cervical cancer for many years to come.