

Parent & Carer Guide

Purpose: This guide helps families understand the **HPV & Me** program and the HPV vaccination.

What your child will learn

- HPV stands for human papillomavirus. It is a common virus that can affect people of all genders.
- Some HPV types can cause genital warts; other higher-risk types can cause cell changes that may later develop into cervical cancer and other HPV-related cancers.
- Many people with HPV have no symptoms, which is why prevention and trusted health advice matter.
- HPV vaccination helps the immune system recognise HPV and make antibodies before possible exposure later in life.
- The lesson discusses healthy behaviour and choices to reduce the risk of an HPV infection or related diseases: vaccination, being smoke-free, safer sexual behaviour later in life and cervical screening when older and eligible.

Respecting family and cultural values

Families have diverse cultural, religious, and personal approaches to sexual health discussions. The classroom lesson is age-appropriate, factual, and prevention-focused. Students are not asked to discuss personal experiences, sexual activity, vaccination status, or family decisions.

Wording you may prefer for family discussions:
"This vaccine helps protect your future health before you are older and may be exposed to HPV."

How HPV is discussed

The lesson explains that HPV is usually spread through intimate skin-to-skin sexual contact. Teachers are encouraged to use calm scientific language, answer general questions, and if needed, encourage students to discuss private or medical questions with their families and health professionals.

Reliable information and support: ACCF/HPV & Me, Australian Government health information, Australian Immunisation Handbook, National Cervical Screening Program, Cancer Council, your GP, school nurse, immunisation provider, or local health service. This guide provides general education only and does not replace medical advice.

What to do next

- Please read the school consent information and return forms by the due date.
- If you are not sure if your child has received the HPV vaccine, check with your school whether your child has already received HPV vaccination or needs a catch-up advice.
- If you have concerns about the vaccine (for example allergies, previous vaccine reactions, fainting, needle anxiety, medical exemptions, or timing after illness) speak with your GP, immunisation provider, school nurse, or local health service.
- If your child is anxious about the vaccine, or HPV encourage them to talk with you, speak to their teacher privately, or book an appointment with a health professional.

Simple conversation starters at home about the HPV and Me program and HPV vaccine

- What did you learn about how vaccines help the body?
- Did the lesson answer your questions, or is there anything you want to ask privately?
- Would you like to read the consent form together?
- Who are trusted people you could ask if you had a health question?

Key reassurance

- The HPV vaccine used in Australia does not contain live HPV and cannot cause HPV infection.
- Vaccination is offered in early adolescence because it works best before exposure to HPV.
- Cervical screening remains important later in life for eligible women and people with a cervix, even after vaccination.