

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine and COVID-19: What you and your child need to know

Many people have reported that COVID-19 disruptions and school closures have impacted their opportunity to have the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.

Yet, it's important to remember that all children aged 12–13 years should have the **HPV vaccine**. HPV vaccination is most effective when given at a younger age, before sexual activity has commenced, and its benefits are long lasting. Having the vaccine now means children will be less likely to develop HPV-related illnesses and cancers in the future.

It is vital that teens keep close to the prescribed schedule or catch up as soon as possible, so they don't get left behind. Two doses of the HPV vaccine are required, given at least six months apart.

If you are a parent or a teen, these questions might be on your mind.

How do I check my child's HPV vaccination status?

If you're unsure if your child has missed one or both doses of the HPV vaccine, and you have a Medicare and myGov account, you can check their immunisation status via the myGov app or website. Parents can only access their child's records via myGov if the child is aged under 14 years. If the child is aged 14 or over they need to create their own myGov account in order to access their immunisation records. Parents and teens can also call the **Australian Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809 to obtain records**.

I had the first dose of the HPV vaccine as part of the school program but have missed the second dose. Do I need to 'catch up' this dose?

Yes. It is important that you have both doses of HPV vaccine to best protect yourself from HPV-related illnesses and cancers in the future. If you had your first dose aged 14 or under and you've missed a dose, there is no need to start the vaccination schedule from the start. You or your parent/guardian should speak with your doctor or local immunisation provider to find out how to catch up on missed doses.

My child's school was closed the day they were supposed to be given the vaccine. Will they re-schedule it and let us know?

Speak to your school or school immunisation provider to find out the arrangements for your school if your child missed the vaccination. The HPV vaccine is also available at your GP or local immunisation service free of charge for those aged under 19 years. The GP may charge a service or appointment fee.

How long do I have to wait after a COVID-19 vaccination or booster to have the HPV vaccination? Or vice versa?

There is no minimum amount of time required between the HPV and COVID-19 vaccines or boosters.

I've had COVID-19 and am still feeling unwell. Can I go ahead with my HPV vaccine?

If you are still impacted by COVID-19-related symptoms, it is best that you wait until you feel well to have the HPV vaccine. If you miss getting the HPV vaccine at school, you can catch up on any missed doses by calling your doctor or local immunisation provider.

HPV-related cancers and sexual activity are a long way off in my child's future. Can't I just wait until the immediate COVID-19 situation calms down before they get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is most effective when given to children between ages 9 and 14. Research shows that younger people create more antibodies to the vaccine than those aged in their late teens. This is why those aged 14 and under only need two doses instead of three. Delaying vaccination to an older age means that a third dose is needed, and may not be free of charge.

What steps are schools and immunisation providers taking to keep teens safe from COVID-19 on vaccination day?

Local council immunisation services and secondary schools are continuing to work together to safely deliver the secondary school immunisation program during the COVID-19 pandemic. All COVID-19 Safe protocols are followed by professional trained immunisation providers, generally nurses. Schools are provided detailed information about keeping their students and staff safe on vaccination days.

MORE INFORMATION: Contact your local immunisation provider or doctor. Visit www.hpvvaccine.org.au.