



**Republic of Namibia**  
**Ministry of Health and Social Services**

**HPV Vaccines: Protecting Our Future**

**The Path Towards a Future Without Cervical Cancer**

HPV vaccination, combined with regular cervical cancer screenings (like Pap smears), is a proven way to prevent cervical cancer.

In Namibia, the HPV vaccine is already available in the private sector, and the Namibian government is working to make it accessible to all girls aged 9-14 year old soon.

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**Our Commitment**

*All vaccines are **voluntary**.*

*The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sport, Arts, and Culture, will conduct awareness campaigns to ensure everyone understands the benefits and safety of the HPV vaccine before vaccination begins.*

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**What is HPV and Why is Vaccination Important?**

**What is HPV?**

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is one of the most common viruses worldwide. It affects both men and women. Most people infected with HPV do not show symptoms and the virus clears on its own. However, high-risk types of HPV can lead to serious health problems, including cervical cancer and other cancers of the reproductive system and the throat region.

**How is HPV transmitted?**

- Through skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity, including vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Even a single encounter with an infected person can transmit HPV.
- You do not need multiple partners to get HPV; anyone sexually active is at risk.

**Who is at risk?**

- Anyone who is sexually active.
  - Factors increasing risk include early sexual activity, multiple partners, having a partner with many previous partners, weakened immune system (like HIV infection), smoking, and not having regular cervical screenings.
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## **The HPV Vaccine: How It Protects You**

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

- It protects against the most dangerous HPV types that cause about 70-90% of cervical cancers and other HPV-related cancers.
- Approved in 2006 and widely used globally.
- Over 135 million doses administered worldwide.

### **How does the vaccine work?**

- The vaccine prevents infection by HPV types 16 and 18, which cause most cervical cancers.
- The quadrivalent vaccine also protects against HPV types 6 and 11, responsible for genital warts.

### **Who should get vaccinated?**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends vaccination for girls aged 9-14, ideally before sexual activity begins.
- Vaccination is also recommended for boys and older girls, as applicable.

### **How many doses are needed?**

- WHO now recommends a single dose for girls aged 9-14, making vaccination easier and more accessible.
- For those aged 15 and over, or with weakened immune systems, 2-3 doses may be needed.

## **Safety and Effectiveness**

### **Is the HPV vaccine safe?**

- Yes. It is one of the safest vaccines ever developed.
- Common side effects include mild pain, redness, or swelling at the injection site, slight fever, or headache.
- Serious side effects are extremely rare, occurring in less than 1 in a million cases.

### **Does the vaccine cause infertility?**

- No, the vaccine does not affect fertility.
- It protects reproductive health by preventing HPV-related cancers that could lead to infertility if untreated.

### **Has the vaccine been effective elsewhere?**

- Countries like Australia, Rwanda, and Sweden have seen significant reductions in cervical cancer rates thanks to vaccination programs.

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## **Myths and Facts**

**Myth:** The HPV vaccine causes infertility.

**Fact:** No, it does not affect fertility.

**Myth:** Only people with many partners get HPV.

**Fact:** Even a single sexual encounter can transmit HPV. Early vaccination is crucial.

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### **Why Vaccinate at a Young Age?**

- The vaccine is most effective when given before exposure to HPV — before sexual activity begins.
- Early vaccination helps prevent future cancers and related health issues.

### **Is One Dose Enough?**

- Yes. WHO recommends just 1 dose for girls aged 9-14 for full protection.
- Older teens or those who are immunocompromised might need two doses.

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### **Further Information and Resources**

For more details, speak to your health worker or visit official public health websites such as <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/hcp/recommendations.html> and [https://www.who.int/teams/immunization-vaccines-and-biologicals/diseases/human-papillomavirus-vaccines-\(HPV\)](https://www.who.int/teams/immunization-vaccines-and-biologicals/diseases/human-papillomavirus-vaccines-(HPV)). Protect yourself today for a healthier tomorrow!  
**Understanding the HPV Vaccine: Protection Today, Prevention Tomorrow.**

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*Let's work together for a healthier Namibia – free of cervical cancer!*