

4 Things to Know about HPV Vaccines

The most effective way to protect women against cervical cancer is to vaccinate girls against human papillomavirus (HPV), an infection that causes 95% of cervical cancer cases. To ensure that an HPV vaccination program succeeds in Ghana, influential decision makers such as policymakers, educators, health care workers, and religious and cultural leaders must have access to accurate and up-to-date information about HPV vaccines. The negative effects of misinformation can spread rapidly, but debunking these harmful myths with the truth is critical for the introduction and widespread acceptance of HPV vaccines in Ghana.

MYTHS

FACTS



My wife, sister, or daughter does not need the HPV vaccine.

HPV is a very common viral infection that causes nearly all cases of cervical cancer. In Ghana, cervical cancer is the second leading cancer among women, and nearly 3,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in Ghana each year. Although every case of HPV infection does not lead to cancer, thousands of women in Ghana lose their lives when the illness progresses. The truth is that **the most effective way to significantly reduce the risk of this life-threatening disease is to be vaccinated against HPV.**

My daughter is too young for this vaccine.



Cervical cancer typically affects older women, but the most effective way to prevent cervical cancer is to vaccinate girls before they may become exposed or infected with HPV. The World Health Organization recommends that all girls between the ages of 9–14 should be vaccinated against HPV. Prevention through early immunization is essential, and vaccinating your daughter now is an important step to protect her health and well-being in the future.

If I get vaccinated, I may not be able to have children.



Like many other vaccines given to adults and children in Ghana, HPV vaccines have gone through careful testing to make sure that they are not only effective but also safe. Decades of research have shown that **there is no evidence that HPV vaccines cause any harm to a woman's fertility or reproductive health.** In fact, since treatment for cervical cancer may negatively impact fertility, lowering your cervical cancer risk through HPV vaccination may actually benefit your long-term reproductive health.

Getting the HPV vaccine will make me sick.



Vaccines work by preparing your body to fight infections in the future, but **HPV vaccines do not cause HPV infection and a vaccinated person cannot “spread” HPV to others.** Research shows that the HPV vaccine does not cause any serious side effects. You may experience mild symptoms right after you get vaccinated, like a headache, fever, or soreness in your arm where the injection was given, but these events are very minor and do not last long.