

HPV vaccination to provide even more protection in future against infections

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At present over one hundred strains of the human papillomavirus (HPV) are known, fourteen of which can trigger cancer. The HPV vaccinations currently in use provide protection from 70 percent of these cancers.

"With the next generation of the HPV vaccine we will reach 90 percent," says Elmar Joura of the University Department of Gynaecology at the MedUni Vienna on the occasion of the forthcoming Immunology Week. This next vaccine generation is currently undergoing clinical trials at the MedUni Vienna and should be available in approximately two years' time.

In Austria, up to 400 women a year develop [invasive cervical cancer](#). In more than 90 percent of the cases [human papillomaviruses](#) are responsible. Pre-cancerous stages of [cervical carcinoma](#) and genital warts, as well as types of cancer in the genital area and the throat, are being increasingly triggered by HPV viruses.

Goal: Free HPV vaccination for everyone

The HPV mechanism of action is insidious: an [HPV infection](#) is slow-burning, goes undetected and without symptoms of illness until a cancer is caused. Vaccination provides protection and is not only advisable for young people. Says Joura: "There is data showing it is effective up to the 45th year of life." According to Joura it would be desirable for the HPV vaccination not only to be recommended in the Austrian vaccination plan, but also for it to be included in the vaccination programme for children thus gaining public financing as childhood is the optimum time for prevention. There has been a recommendation to this effect by the Chief Medical Officer since 2007, and a consensus decision in the Health Ministry since last October.

At present, the quadruple vaccination, which has to be administered three times, costs a total of 570 Euros for example. At present it is recommended that girls and women between nine and 40 year old are vaccinated, boys and young men between nine and 26. Countries such as Australia, Germany and the USA have only just followed suit and adjusted their provisions accordingly.

The urgency of the public purse providing the finance is identifiable in the statistics according to the MedUni researcher: "In Austria there are, according to estimates, 700 avoidable cancer cases a year caused by HPV, in addition to this there are 3,000 preventable surgeries due to pre-cancerous developments to the cervix as well as 15,000 cases of genital warts. Vaccination would clearly cut this."

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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