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www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk

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Dear Parent or Guardian

**Beating Cervical Cancer
HPV School Based Vaccination Programme**

We are about to start the 9th year of the successful HPV Vaccination Programme and would like to offer your daughter the opportunity to have this course of vaccinations in school.

The HPV vaccine is offered routinely to all girls in year 8 at secondary school with the second dose being offered in year 9.

On the back of this letter, there is some useful information about the virus and the vaccination. The vaccination programme against cervical cancer has been routinely provided in this country since August 2008. We have the opportunity of helping to prevent the spread of a very serious disease that affects over 3000 women every year in the UK and causes over 1000 deaths. By having this vaccination your daughter will be protected against the commonest cause of cervical cancer for many years to come.

More information is available on the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk (search for HPV), as well as links to other useful websites. You can also contact the Immunisation Team or your School Nurse for more information.

Enclosed with this letter is a consent form and a leaflet about the vaccination, please complete and return the consent form to your daughter's school in the next seven days.

Please take this opportunity to check that your child is up-to-date with all their vaccinations. You can check with your GP Practice or on www.nhs.uk for the vaccination schedule.

Dates of Immunisation sessions in schools are listed on the Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust website. If your child misses the immunisation session in school, these vaccinations will still be available at a later date through catch-up clinics that the Immunisation Team organises. Please contact the Immunisation Team on one of the numbers below to discuss further.

We hope that the information provided helps you and your daughter make a positive decision about the vaccination, and that you will both feel confident that by having the HPV vaccine she will be protecting herself and others from a potentially serious disease later in life.

Yours sincerely



**Rosanna Raven
Immunisation Clinical Nurse Manager – Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust**

**Brighton Team
01273 696011 ext. 3789**

**Chichester Team
01273 265985 ext. 8100**

**Crawley Team
01293 600300 ext. 3985**

What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer affects the cervix (the entrance to the womb). It is caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV), which is spread from one person to another during sexual activity. There are over 100 types of HPV but only thirteen of these cause cervical cancer and just two – types 16 and 18 – cause over 70% of the cases.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine stops the human papilloma virus from developing in the body and so prevents cervical cancer (in 70% of the cases). The vaccine does not protect against all of the other cancer-causing types, so it's vital that women still go for routine cervical screening tests when they are older.

Why does my daughter have to have the vaccine at 12 or 13 years of age?

The virus that causes cervical cancer is spread by someone having sex or being sexually intimate with another who has the virus. Whilst most girls don't start having sex until they are 16 or over, it has been shown the vaccine provides the best protection if it is given at 12 – 13 years of age as the immune response is better. It is still important to have the vaccine even if a girl is sexually active as it can provide protection against any of the HPV types in the vaccine they have not been exposed to.

Why two doses not three?

Recent research shows the antibody response to two doses is as good as with three doses in girls under the age of 15.

Why can't her older sister be vaccinated too?

She can be - in school, if she is 16 years or under and at her GP's if she is between 16 and 18 years. If you have a daughter under the age of 18 who would now like to have the vaccine, please contact the Immunisation team - contact details for each area are below. If she is over 15 years of age, she will have to have the three dose schedule.

How will I know when my daughter is going to have the vaccination?

You have been sent a consent form with this letter and **it is important that the consent form is signed and returned to the school within the next 7 days**. To get the best protection, your daughter will need two injections (or three if over 15 years of age) over a period of between 6 months and two years. The date for the 1st dose has been arranged with your daughter's school and they will inform girls nearer the time of the session or publish the date on their website. The 2nd dose of the vaccine will be given when your daughter is in Year 9 and this date will be arranged with the school in due course. Your daughter should have breakfast as usual on the morning of the vaccine. Should your daughter miss a vaccination due to absence there will be the opportunity for catch up sessions either at school or in a community setting.

What if she doesn't want to have the vaccination?

She doesn't have to have it, if she doesn't want to. But it is recommended that she does have it for the reasons given above. Having the vaccination now will protect her for many years. Suggest she speaks to the nurse or doctor if she wants more information, on her own, or with you, if she'd prefer.

What if she wants the vaccination but, as her parents, we'd rather she didn't have it?

You should discuss this with your doctor or nurse to get more advice. The decision is legally hers as long as she understands the issues in giving consent but the nurse would much rather have your permission as well. It is important for your daughter's future to appreciate that having the vaccination now will protect her from the most common cause of cervical cancer for many years to come.

Should my daughter be having the School Leaver Booster (SLB) vaccinations in year 9 as well?

Yes. The Immunisation Team will be arranging a separate visit to your daughter's school for these vaccinations.