



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

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Minister for Health announces expansion of the Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-Up Programme

The Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD has today announced the expansion of the Laura Brennan HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccine Catch-Up Programme to include all males up to their 22nd birthday.

From 29 August 2023, those who are now eligible can register to get the vaccine at www.hpv.ie, under this programme which is open until 31 December.

Since its launch last year, the programme has offered free HPV vaccines to all boys and girls in second-level education who were previously eligible to receive the vaccine in school and who had not yet received it.

It is also open to young women up to the age of 25 who have left secondary school and did not previously receive the vaccine.

The vaccine protects against the types of HPV that cause approximately 90% of cervical cancers, 90-95% of HPV-related anal cancer, and 90% of genital warts.

HPV infection can lead to cancer in men, including penile, anal, oral, and throat cancers, as well as anogenital warts.

To date, the Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-Up Programme has provided free vaccines to over 3,500 young people who were previously eligible to receive it in schools and had not yet received it.

It is named in memory of Laura Brennan who campaigned for higher uptake of the HPV vaccine before her death from cervical cancer at the age of 26, in 2019.

Minister Donnelly said:

“I am delighted to announce the addition of males up to the age of 22 to the list of those who are eligible to receive the HPV vaccine as part of the Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-Up Programme which is open until the end of December.

“Huge credit for this programme is due to the Brennan family who continue to campaign tirelessly in the memory of their brave daughter Laura. Laura herself was also an incredible patient advocate and her campaigning led to increased uptake of the life-saving HPV vaccine.

“It is by increasing HPV vaccination and screening among our population that we will finally reach our goal of eliminating cervical cancer in Ireland.

“I’m also encouraging young men to take this opportunity to protect themselves against a number of cancers caused by HPV.”

Chief Medical Officer Prof Breda Smyth said:

“The HPV vaccine is proven to be safe and effective and it saves lives. I am urging all young people who did not previously avail of the vaccine in school to consider getting it. It’s a simple step that will increase protection against cervical and other types of cancer.”

Laura Brennan’s parents Bernie and Larry Brennan said:

“As a family we know only too well the devastation that cervical cancer can cause. “While we miss our wonderful daughter constantly, we are very heartened that the work she dedicated so much of her life to is being continued through the Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-Up Programme which is offering another opportunity for eligible females and now males up to age 22 to receive the HPV vaccine for free through the HSE vaccination clinics if they have not received it before.

“Laura was determined to increase uptake of the HPV vaccine to help protect people from various cancers and eliminate cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine is effective in preventing cancer and we encourage everyone who is eligible to take this opportunity to protect their health.”

Dr Éamonn O’Moore, Director of National Health Protection HSE said:

“The HSE welcome the Minister’s announcement about the expansion of the Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-Up programme to include older males. This week I would encourage people to visit www.hpv.ie to read more about why it is important for young people to get vaccinated.

“On 29 August, the HSE will make the booking system available for people to book their appointment in a local HSE vaccination clinic.”

ENDS

Notes to editor:

The human papillomavirus, or HPV, can cause cancer and genital warts in both women and men. The vaccine, which is proven to be safe and effective, protects against the types of HPV that cause 9 out of 10 cervical cancers.

Recent research has highlighted that almost one in three men over the age of 15 is infected with at least one genital human papillomavirus (HPV) and one in five is infected with one or more high-risk HPV (HR-HPV) types.

Some types of HPV can lead to cancer in men, including penile, anal, oral, and throat cancers, while others lead to anogenital warts.

The HPV vaccine has been offered to girls since 2010 as part of the school immunisation programme. The programme was extended in 2019 to include boys in

first year of second-level schools. This programme will continue as normal throughout 2023 and is not part of the catch-up programme.

The Laura Brennan HPV Vaccine Catch-up Programme will run until December 31.

It is open to those who have not received a HPV vaccine and are:

- females who are 24 years of age or younger
- males who are 21 years of age or younger

The HPV vaccine will be delivered by HSE vaccinators and is available free of charge through HSE vaccination clinics.

Eligible people can register at www.hpv.ie to receive a HPV vaccine.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee has recently advised that only one dose of HPV vaccine is required in those aged under 25. Anyone with a weak immune system will require three doses.