

August 2025

The NHS's top midwife is urging newly eligible pregnant mothers that "now is the time to act" and get the RSV vaccine to protect their baby ahead of this winter.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a leading cause of infant mortality around the world and a main cause of child hospitalisations every year – with almost 7,000 bed days taken up by children with RSV last winter in England (6,815 from 25 November 2024 – 30 March 2025).

Kate Brintworth, chief midwifery officer for NHS England, said: "While for most adults RSV only causes mild, cold like symptoms, for older adults and young children it can lead to serious breathing problems that can end up in hospitalisation.

"Getting vaccinated while pregnant is the best way to protect your baby from the moment they are born, and now is the time for mums to act, to make sure their babies are protected ahead of their first few months this winter, when there tends to be more bugs circulating."

The RSV vaccine was offered to pregnant women in England for the first time last September and has now helped to protect more than 300,000 mothers and babies.

Pregnant mums from 28 weeks onwards can access the RSV jab through their maternity services or via their local GP practice.

Older adults aged 75 to 79 years old are also eligible, and across the coming weeks NHS England will send invites to over one million people via letter, text, email or NHS App notifications, to remind those eligible to come forward.

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)'s Head of Service Development, Maxine Palmer, said: "It's positive to see the NHS taking action to raise awareness of the risks of RSV to newborn babies.

"Expectant parents need clear and accurate information about vaccinations during pregnancy, so they can make their own informed decisions about their health and the health of their baby.

"We recommend all parents speak to their midwife or doctor to discuss their options and to learn more about preventing, recognising, and treating illness and infection during pregnancy."

NHS England is rolling out the one-off injection medication, nirsevimab, from late September to provide protection against RSV for eligible high-risk and very preterm babies who are born too early to be protected by the RSV vaccine offered to pregnant women.

Parents should also ensure their children are up to date with their routine NHS vaccinations to protect against infections including HPV, meningitis and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). For children and young adults up to 25 years old, please speak to your GP about catch-up vaccination options.

Vaccinations to protect against flu and whooping cough are also recommended to women during pregnancy to further protect the health of the mother and their baby.

Around 100 community pharmacies in the East of England and the Midlands are also now delivering the RSV vaccine, with NHS England planning to expand this offer to up to 150 additional pharmacies across the country, focusing on areas where access is limited to make it as easy as possible for eligible people to receive their jabs.

Healthwatch Hartlepool

Greenbank, Waldon Street, Hartlepool, TS24 7QS

Tel 0800 2545552

Text; 07749 688795

yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk

www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk

Hundreds of thousands of people urged to get lifesaving cancer vaccine

The NHS is urging hundreds of thousands of people yet to have the lifesaving human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to get protected against cervical and other cancers.

GP practices across England will send invites via letters, emails, texts and the NHS App to patients aged 16-25 whose records show they did not get their HPV vaccination in school. The vaccine is routinely offered each year to boys and girls in year 8 (aged 12-13) to help protect them against catching the HPV infection which causes nearly all cervical cancers, and is linked to various cancers. If anyone misses the jab, NHS teams carry out school catch-up visits and host community clinics for home-schooled children. But in the last three years alone, more than 418,000 children left school unvaccinated for HPV – and there are believed to be many others now aged 16-25 who were not jabbed at school. So NHS chiefs want to reach as many as possible, under plans to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040 as set out in the recently-published 10 Year Health Plan. The NHS aims to boost uptake among girls to 90% by 2040, while also increasing the number of women getting cervical screening. In the 2023/24 academic year, 76.7% of girls and 71.2% of boys aged 14-15 were vaccinated by year 10. Uptake in year 8 increased compared to the previous year (72.9% of girls and 67.7% of boys in 2023/24, compared to 71.3% and 65.2% respectively for the first dose in 2022/23). Until 2023 two doses were required.

Dr Sharif Ismail, Consultant Epidemiologist at UKHSA, said: “We know that uptake of the HPV vaccination in young people has fallen significantly since the pandemic, leaving many, many thousands across the country at greater risk of HPV-related cancers. This is a real concern as each HPV vaccine, now just a single dose offered in schools, gives a young person good protection against the devastating impact of these cancers, which includes cervical, genital, mouth and throat cancers. This new catch-up campaign is a really important opportunity for us to make sure that no teenage girl or boy, young woman or man is denied that protection.

“We’re calling on all parents to return their children’s HPV vaccination consent forms promptly. This simple action could protect your child from developing cancer in the future. For young adults up to age 25, who missed their school vaccinations, please speak to your GP about catch-up options. It’s never too late to get protected.”

Public Health and Prevention Minister Ashley Dalton said: “The HPV vaccine is our most powerful tool in our fight to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040. But we’ve got a long way to go. Thousands of young people are still unvaccinated and vulnerable to this disease – which is so easily prevented.

“If you missed your vaccination at school, it’s not too late. Don’t hesitate to make an appointment with your GP. One jab could save your life.” The vaccine can also be given to those up to age 45 with immune-compromised conditions and men who have sex with other men. The latest HPV vaccine, introduced in England in 2021, is proven to be even more effective – and in the long term is predicted to reduce cases of women’s cancer by 16% and HPV-attributable deaths by 9%, compared to the previous type.

Studies in England have shown that the HPV vaccine stops 90% of cervical cancer cases. Last month the NHS rolled-out digital invitations and reminders for cervical screening via the NHS App, as part of a new ‘ping and book’ service.

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