

FROM COMMITMENT TO ACTION: COUNTRIES UNITE TO ELIMINATE CERVICAL CANCER

On 17 November 2025, the World marks World Cervical Cancer Elimination Day, designated by the 78th World Health Assembly as the first official World Health Day dedicated to eliminating a cancer.

The Day builds on a global movement that began on 17 November 2020, when 194 countries collectively committed to eliminating cervical cancer, with the WHO launching a Global Strategy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.

This year's observance, under the theme 'Act Now: Eliminate Cervical Cancer' calls for bold, united action to build on existing progress and accelerate impact towards achieving the WHO's '90-70-90' targets by 2030.

The WHO declares that elimination is within reach if we act **now, together** – ensuring every girl is protected through HPV vaccination and every woman has access to prevention, screening, and care.

Every action – large or small – adds to a growing global movement proving elimination is possible within our lifetime.

Evidence demonstrates that the HPV vaccine is highly effective; cervical cancer cases in England have been cut by 90% amongst girls vaccinated when the program began in 2008, and in Scotland, there hasn't been a single new case.

However, while efforts have mainly concentrated on preventing HPV-related infections in women, it is vital to recognise and address the impact of HPV on boys and men. In 2022, worldwide, there were an estimated **95,407 new cancers and 44,038 deaths** from HPV-related cancers in men.

High-risk HPV infection is a major cause of several cancers in men and women, including oropharyngeal cancer (most common in the mouth, throat, voice box, salivary glands, nose and sinuses, thyroid) as well as anal and, in men, penile cancers.

- **Overall Infection:** One in three men worldwide is infected with HPV.
- **Anal Cancer:** 1,484 cases diagnosed each year, with 91% linked to HPV.
- **Penile Cancer:** 700 new cases diagnosed annually in the UK, with 63% linked to HPV.
- **Oropharyngeal Cancer:** is the most common HPV-related cancer in men in the UK, with rates rising by 30% per decade.
- Rates of oropharyngeal cancer in men now exceed cervical cancer in women.
- Only a third of cases are detected early.
- 101% higher in men from deprived areas.

The increase in HPV-related cancers in men underscores the urgent need to break down barriers and increase awareness of the benefits of vaccination for boys and men. It is the most preventative measure against HPV infections and related health issues in men, yet global vaccination coverage stands at a mere 4%.

As of April 2023, only 47 countries have offered vaccination to males, compared to 140 countries that have HPV vaccines in their national programs.

This is a critical moment for change. There needs to be a call for the expansion of HPV immunisation programs among all individuals, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Including boys and men in a vaccination approach will enhance protection for both men and women and reduce the risk of associated cancers. Expanding vaccination programs to boys not only maximises the health benefits but also challenges harmful misconceptions about sexuality that often unfairly target women.

Discussions on HPV and prevention should move beyond focusing solely on female responsibility to acknowledging that HPV transmission is a shared issue.

Together, we can work toward a future free from HPV and the diseases it causes.