

# **61 percent fall in female genital warts due to free HPV vaccine**

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among young women since the introduction of the national human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination program, a new study from the University of Sydney reveals.

The study, which reviewed more than a million patient encounters between 2000 and 2012, showed a significant year-on-year reduction in the management rate of genital warts in women aged 15-27 years since the [vaccination program](#) started. The findings are published in *PLOS One* journal.

"The results show that the program has been a widespread success," said lead author of the study Christopher Harrison of the University of Sydney.

The HPV vaccination program was introduced in 2007, and the rate of genital wart presentation fell dramatically from 4.33 per 1,000 encounters pre-program (2002-2006) to 1.67 per 1,000 encounters in the post-program period (2008-2012).

Australia was one of the first countries to provide the HPV vaccine free to young women through a national immunisation program. The vaccine protects against two major viral causes of genital warts (HPV 6 and 11) and two major viral causes of cervical cancer (HPV 16 and 18). "This is the first study to report the impact of HPV vaccinations on genital warts management in general practice, which is where the majority of cases are treated," said Mr Harrison.

"We looked at women potentially covered by the vaccination program (15-27 years), and the data showed a 61 per cent decrease in the management rate of genital warts in the four years after the program started, compared with the four years before the program.

"This is an excellent result as not only do genital warts cause distress in

affected patients, but treatment is at a substantial cost to the health system.

"For all other age-sex groups (who were not covered by the program) there was no significant change in the management rate of genital warts between the pre-program and post-program periods. "There was also no significant decrease in other sexually transmitted infections over this period, which means that the decrease in genital warts was likely due to the vaccination program, not a change in the women's behaviour.

"The program has proved to be a great success and of huge benefit to the sexual health of Australia, and has clearly proven to be very worthwhile," Mr Harrison said.

## **Fast facts:**

- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that affects both males and females. Anyone who has ever had sexual contact could have HPV.
- HPV doesn't usually cause symptoms so people infected with the virus may not know they have it.
- Different kinds of HPV can affect different parts of the body, and some types are more harmful than others. The more harmful types of HPV can cause abnormal cells that lead to a range of cancers and disease such as [genital warts](#).
- Vaccinating against Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the best way to prevent HPV-related cancers and disease. The vaccination is most effective when given before a person becomes sexually active.
- The HPV vaccine is being provided free in Australian schools as part of the National Immunisation Program.

Provided by University of Sydney

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