

Key Messages

Background and Context

Chronic Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infections are associated with the development of carcinoma in both women and men. Given the high burden of disease, prevention is of great interest. A vaccine against HPV infection is available in Switzerland and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health recommend the vaccination for the female and male population aged 11 to 26.

General practice plays an important role in the field of primary prevention including vaccination. In the case of adult patients, the general practitioner is typically the primary point of contact for all medical queries. Consequently, young adults who have not yet been vaccinated can be identified in this setting and a catch-up vaccination can be carried out.

The Issue

HPV vaccination rates are low in Switzerland and numerous factors are contributing to the low vaccination uptake rates. Despite general reasons, such as vaccine hesitancy or lack of awareness and information that may apply to all types of vaccines, specific reasons within the general practice setting could be identified:

- The HPV vaccination programmes limit access to vaccination.
- Young adults rarely visit their general practitioners for preventive medicine. Accordingly, their immunisation status is rarely assessed.
- A gender gap focussing on the female gender can be observed. Men are correspondingly less frequently vaccinated.

Recommendations for Action

- Access to vaccination must be facilitated.
- More frequent determination of the vaccination status in acute care.
- Rise awareness about the importance to vaccinate young men.

Implementation Considerations

Barriers to implementation include:

- Competition for resources between HPV and other important health issues.
- Low health literacy of young adults regarding vaccination
- Behavioural changes are necessary

Facilitators to implementation include:

- Increased access to the vaccination
- Reduction of administrative burden and costs
- Increased health awareness among the population at risk