

Schools are denying girls life-saving cervical cancer jab because of religious objections

- Wards off sexually transmitted human papilloma virus
- Routinely given to 12 and 13-year-old girls since 2008
- Jab could save 75 per cent of the 1,000 lives lost each year to cervical cancer

By [Fiona Macrae Science Correspondent](#)

Many girls are not being given a potentially life-saving cervical cancer jab because of religious objections by schools.

The HPV vaccine wards off the sexually transmitted human papilloma virus, which is behind most cervical cancer cases.

It has routinely been given to 12 and 13-year-old girls since 2008, with scientists saying it works best if given before they become sexually active.



Lifesaver: It is thought the jab, routinely given since 2008, could save three-quarters of the 1,000 lives lost each year to cervical cancer

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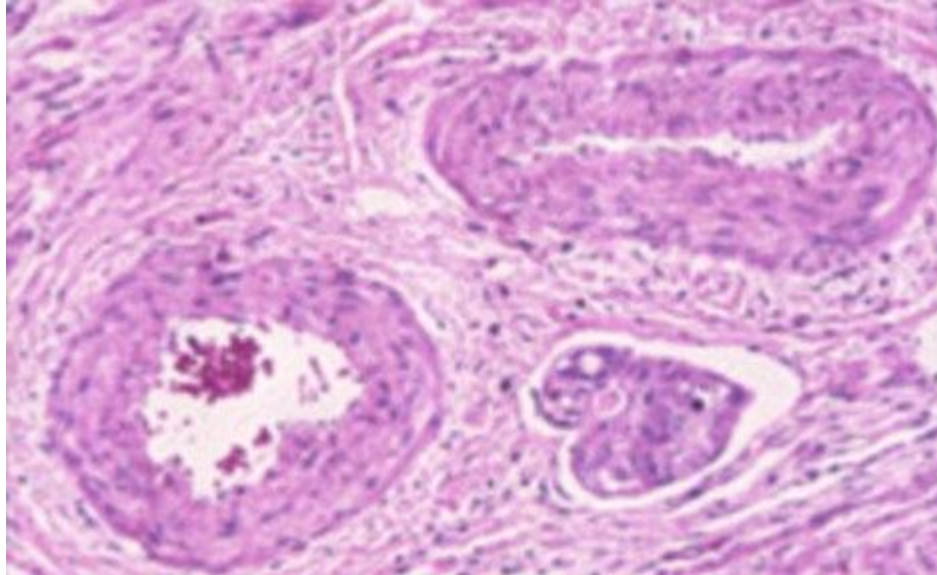
The British Medical Association said the schools were putting the girls at risk later in life. But critics say that vaccination at such a young age could fuel promiscuity.

GP magazine found that 24 schools in 83 of England's 152 Primary Care Trust areas that responded to a Freedom of Information request were opting out of the vaccination programme, many on religious grounds.

Reasons included 'pupils follow strict Christian principles, marry within their own community and do not practise sex outside marriage' and the jab not being in keeping with the school ethos.

The magazine found the majority of the schools opting out did not tell local GPs, who could have then given girls the choice.

It added that the total is likely to rise in the future, as more academies and free schools open and reject blanket vaccination.



Dangerous: The HPV vaccine wards off the sexually transmitted human papilloma virus, which is behind most cervical cancer cases. Pictured cancerous cells for cervical cancer

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) immunisation lead, Dr George Kassianos said: 'No matter which system you examine, here in the UK or abroad, there will be parents or individuals who will refuse vaccination.

'None of our immunisations are compulsory. We therefore must accept that some children or adults will not be vaccinated.

'It is hard to understand how immunisation against cancer can be rejected but that is how it is out there in the community.'

Dr Richard Vautrey, BMA general practitioners committee deputy chairman, said:

'It is a concern that so many areas are reporting that schools have refused to allow their children to receive HPV vaccine on the premises.

'This is placing the children at risk in later life and should be challenged.'

The RCGP said GPs need to be informed about which pupils are being denied vaccines at school to help cut cervical cancer deaths.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2175083/Schools-denying-girls-life-saving-cervical-cancer-jab-religious-objections.html#ixzz20y63H4Cu>