

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **New data shows young unvaccinated women also more likely to miss cervical screening**

New data released today shows that young women who aren't vaccinated against HPV are also less likely to participate in cervical screening, presenting a new challenge in the quest to eliminate cervical cancer, according to Cancer Council Australia.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's latest report, "*Analysis of cervical cancer and abnormality outcomes in an era of cervical screening and HPV vaccination in Australia*" explores trends in cervical screening behaviour and outcomes from screening and vaccination over a ten-year period.

The report shows that cervical screening participation is at least 10 percent lower in young women aged 25 – 29 who are unvaccinated, compared to young women of the same age who received the HPV vaccine.

Screening participation rates in fully vaccinated young women is 59%, compared to 44% in unvaccinated 25 – 29 year olds.

Dr Megan Smith, Research Fellow at Cancer Council NSW and advisor to Cancer Council Australia, said that the latest data contradicts what was previously thought about the link between HPV vaccination and cervical screening behaviour.

"Previous early data suggested that women who were vaccinated against HPV were less likely to participate in screening.

"But this latest data suggests this isn't the case - it's the young women who aren't vaccinated who are also most likely to be the ones who are missing their regular cervical screening test. It's a much scarier prospect because it leaves them particularly vulnerable to cervical cancer."

Dr Smith said it was important for all eligible women to participate in cervical screening from age 25, regardless of whether they had been vaccinated against HPV, and for parents of teens to support HPV vaccination. The HPV vaccine is given to boys and girls at age 12-13 as part of the school-delivered national immunisation program.

"Most cervical cancers occur in women who have never been screened or are overdue for their test and cancers detected through screening have better survival rates. Regardless of whether you had the HPV vaccine, you still need to screen from the age of 25."

Cancer Council NSW research, released in 2018, showed that Australia could become the first country in the world to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue by 2035, thanks to our HPV vaccination program and renewed cervical screening program based on HPV testing.

"To achieve cervical cancer elimination in Australia we need to ensure that screening and HPV vaccination uptake is adequate across all segments of our community. However, we know from other data that First Nations women, and women living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas or remote locations are less likely to be up to date with their cervical screening.

"Australia is at a key junction as we head towards cervical cancer elimination – but we won't get there without specially tailored communications programs to make sure vulnerable women don't get left behind, particularly in screening."

For more information on cervical screening, visit Cancer Council's website [cervicalscreening.org.au](http://cervicalscreening.org.au)

**ENDS**

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