



A turning point for HPV elimination

The new United Nation's Declaration on Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health

For the first time, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has called for boys to be included in HPV vaccination programmes.

The new Political Declaration on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the promotion of mental health and well-being was approved by 175 member states at the UN General Assembly on 15 December 2025, and includes language on the need to reach boys.

This language marks a historic shift. It sends a clear global signal that HPV vaccination should protect every child and strengthens the case for recognising HPV vaccination as a cancer and noncommunicable diseases (NCD) prevention intervention, not only a cervical cancer intervention. The declaration also provides a n important new tool for advocates in their efforts to secure routine universal (gender-neutral) HPV vaccination in their countries as well as globally.

What was the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on NCDs?

High-level meetings bring together Heads of State and Government to agree political commitments on major global health challenges. The Fourth High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the prevention and control of NCDs and mental health took place in September 2025. The meeting resulted in the adoption in December of a new political declaration that reinforces countries' commitments to preventing and controlling NCDs, including cancer.

Political declarations are important advocacy tools. They can be used by civil society organisations and individuals to hold governments accountable for the commitments they have made.

The Political Declaration commits governments to:

*"Eliminate cervical cancer by scaling up where appropriate (i) human papillomavirus vaccination coverage for girls **and boys**; (ii) access to effective, feasible and appropriate screening for cervical cancer, especially for those at higher risk, such as women living with HIV; (iii) access to early, quality treatment for all women with cervical cancer; and integrate breast and cervical cancer prevention in national programmes."* (Paragraph 52)

Why is HPV an NCD issue?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) causes about 5 percent of all cancers globally. Nearly everyone will acquire an HPV infection at some point in their lives. Each year, HPV causes hundreds of thousands of cancer cases in women and men, contributing substantially to the global burden of NCDs. We estimate that HPV causes at least 180,000 cancer cases in men globally each year.

HPV-related cancers and diseases are largely preventable. Highly effective vaccines, alongside screening and access to timely treatment, can reduce incidence, mortality, and long-term suffering for individuals and families. Preventing HPV-related cancers is therefore a core component of NCD prevention.

Why does this moment matter now?

The inclusion of HPV vaccination for boys in the declaration aligns with growing global momentum:

- Routine universal vaccination is now known to be the best way of protecting the whole community against HPV infection.

- Vaccine supply constraints are easing as global manufacturing capacity increases.
- Research shows that routine universal HPV vaccination is cost-effective in all settings.
- Regional and international bodies and inter-governmental agencies such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and European Code Against Cancer are increasingly calling for the inclusion of boys in HPV vaccination programmes.

PAHO, with the support of its Strategic Advisory Group on Vaccine-Preventable Diseases, has recommended since 2023 that both girls and boys aged 9-14 receive at least one dose of the

HPV vaccine to achieve high coverage (90%+) by age 15 as a priority. The updated European Code Against Cancer in 2025 now recommends HPV vaccination for girls and boys with programmes resourced to reach the 90% coverage target for girls and boys. Published by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organisation, the code builds on the existing commitment to gender-neutral vaccination outlined in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan from the European Commission.

Together, these developments remove long-standing barriers and create a critical opportunity to accelerate progress towards eliminating HPV-related cancers and diseases for everyone.

FROM THE POLITICAL DECLARATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

Sustaining momentum from the UNGA High-level Meeting is essential to ensure commitments are translated into national policy, financing, and programmes to protect everyone against HPV.

What HPV advocates and organisations can do:

- Write to or meet your Ministry of Health to welcome the inclusion of HPV vaccination for boys in the UN political declaration. Ask how these commitments will be implemented nationally.
- Join 70 organisations from around the world and endorse and promote the global Call for routine universal HPV vaccination. For further details, please visit www.endhpvglobal.org
- Advocate for and support the inclusion of all HPV-related cancers within national cancer and NCD policies and programmes.
- Work with cancer, NCD, immunisation, and child and adolescent health partners to strengthen a collective advocacy voice to end the suffering caused by HPV cancers and diseases.

KEY MESSAGES FOR ADVOCATES

1. HPV elimination reduces the burden of NCDs

HPV causes multiple cancers and diseases in women and men. Preventing HPV through vaccination, screening, and treatment is a cost-effective NCD intervention that reduces the future cancer burden and strengthens health systems.

2. The time is now for routine universal HPV vaccination

The evidence for routine universal vaccination is robust and overwhelming as evidenced by the 86 countries worldwide which already routinely protect both their girls and boys. Updated vaccination schedules (ie. one-dose programmes)

improved supply, and a growing global consensus mean that vaccinating boys as well as girls is now both feasible and strategic.

3. HPV must be recognised beyond cervical cancer

The lack of clarity about who should be protected against HPV undermines implementation. HPV should be consistently communicated as a cause of multiple cancers and diseases that affects both males and females (including cervical cancer, vulval, vaginal, penile, anal, oropharyngeal cancers as well as recurrent respiratory papillomatosis and anogenital warts). Planning must begin for new targets beyond 2030 to eliminate all HPV-related cancers and diseases.

FROM POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO REAL PROTECTION

The UN political declaration provides a powerful advocacy opportunity. HPV advocates and organisations can now help ensure that global commitments lead to real protection for every child and sustained progress towards eliminating HPV-related cancers and diseases as part of the global NCD response.