

How would you feel if this happened to your Daughter??

14-year-old schoolgirl dies after being given cervical cancer jab

Natalie Morton, a 14-year-old schoolgirl, has died shortly after being given the cervical cancer vaccine, prompting critics to call for the immunisation programme to be suspended.

By [Chris Irvine](#)

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Natalie Morton died hours after receiving the cervical cancer vaccine but family says she had been ill for some time

The teenager was one of four classmates who suffered side-effects at Blue Coat CofE School in Coventry after receiving the jab as part of the national immunisation programme. She was subsequently taken to Coventry's University Hospital where she died during the afternoon.

The other girls suffered dizziness and nausea after being injected with Cervarix, which guards against the human papilloma virus (HPV), but did not need hospital treatment. The batch of vaccine has since been quarantined and the Medicines and Health care products Regulatory Agency is investigating.

The Morton family issued a short statement through NHS Coventry, asking for privacy and thanking those who had offered them support.

The statement read: "On behalf of all of Natalie's family, we would like to extend our thanks to all those who have shown concern and sympathy following Natalie's tragic death. We would ask for time and privacy now to mourn a precious daughter, sister and granddaughter."

Dr Caron Grainger, Joint Director of Public Health for NHS Coventry and the city's council, said the incident happened shortly after the girl received the vaccine, but "no link can be made between the death and the vaccine until all the facts are known and a post-mortem takes place."

A tribute group on social networking site Facebook already had close to 200 members last night.

One friend, Suzie Grace Gee, wrote: "What a lovely girl. Always had a smile on her face! It's such a shock to everyone, and it's going to be odd not seeing her every Sunday at church. She will forever be missed, and my thoughts and prayers are with the family. She's with Jesus now! Rest in peace."

Charmaine Dunn-Myria, 15, who was in the same year as Natalie, said: "There was panic around the school when we found out what happened. Girls were in tears in the corridors and everyone was in shock."

"I had my jab today as well and I was really worried about it and that something was going to happen to me.

"They never told us that there was any danger in these jabs. I didn't know you could get sick or die from them.

"The school gave everyone a letter telling us about Natalie and the three other girls. I am just really scared about what will happen to them. I can't believe this has happened."

She added: "I knew Natalie to say hello to in the corridors and she always seemed like a really nice girl, I can't believe this has happened and she is gone."

In a letter to parents, Dr Julie Roberts, the school's headteacher said during the immunisation "an unfortunate incident occurred and one of the girls suffered a rare, but extreme reaction to the vaccine.

"A number of other girls also reported being unwell and some were sent home.

"If your daughter has received a vaccine today we ask that you are extra vigilant regarding any signs or symptoms."

Speaking to the media outside the school gates on Tuesday morning Dr Roberts, said special assemblies would be held for pupils at the school.

"We have all the chaplains in today to talk to the children. We have made provision for counselling and we have a school chaplain for every year," she said.

Two members of the local education authority will also attend the school to help with the counselling process.

Dr Roberts added: "As far as the school is concerned, our thoughts and prayers are with the parents and our first priority has to be the children. Our priority has to be with the students themselves to make sure they are supported.

"There are counsellors on hand throughout the day alongside our school chaplain. The primary care trust are making their own investigations and we are hoping that by the end of the day we will have a clearer picture."

The HPV virus is a sexually transmitted infection that causes up to seven in 10 cervical cancer cases. If any link were proved between the 14-year-old's death and the jab it is thought it would be the first since the nationwide vaccination commenced last year.

The Cervarix vaccine is being distributed to all schoolgirls aged 12 and over as part of the national campaign, which began last year. By 2011 all girls under 18 will have been offered the jab. Ministers say the scheme will ultimately save 700 lives a year. Around 1.4 million doses have been administered in Britain so far.

But since April last year the MHRA has received more than 2,000 reports of suspected reactions to the vaccine, including 409 related to anaphylactic shock, which can be rapidly fatal.

There are two cervical cancer vaccines license, Cervarix, made by GlaxoSmithKline, and Gardasil, made by Merck.

Many other European countries are using Gardasil because of the additional protection it offers against four strains of HPV instead of two.

Andrew Lansley, the shadow health secretary, said the news was "tragic" and "deeply concerning for all the families involved."

"The Department of Health and the MHRA need to investigate, as a matter of urgency, what the cause of this is so they can assess how widespread the problem could be", he said.

"With any vaccine part of the licensing process is to establish how safe it is, but it is impossible to rule out the possibility that some patients might suffer adverse reactions.

"However, this again raises the question which we have asked for some time, as to why the Government won't publish the assessments it made of the relative merits of the two HPV vaccines and why we therefore use a different vaccine to most other comparable countries."

Jackie Fletcher, the founder of Jabs, a support group for vaccine damaged children, called for Cervarix jab to be suspended while an investigation was conducted.

"We have a situation where a girl believed to be healthy joins a queue, is given the HPV vaccine, has a reaction and I believe some of the other girls reacted as well, and then dies this afternoon. Obviously I don't know what this girl has died from, but the fact she has reacted in such close proximity, along with the other girls, means this particular vaccine should be suspended."

Professor Malcolm McCrae, from the University of Warwick's Department of Biological Sciences, told Radio 4's The World Tonight it was "unlikely" the programme would be suspended.

"As with any medical intervention, vaccines are no different in that sense that one can on occasion see tragic consequences, but overall this is an extremely well tested vaccine which has been produced in response to a fairly severe health problem," he said.

Dr Pim Kon, medical director at GlaxoSmithKline UK, said: "Our deepest sympathies are with the family and friends of the young girl.

"We are working with the Department of Health and MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) to better understand this case, as at this stage the exact cause of this tragic death is unknown."

The global pharmaceutical company added that the vast majority of suspected adverse reactions have related either to the symptoms of recognised side effects or were due to the injection process and not the vaccine itself.

Gillian Merron, the Public Health Minister, said: "Our deepest sympathies are with the family. It is important we have the results of further investigations as soon as possible to established the cause of this sad event."

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) received 2,137 reports of suspected side effects of Cervarix between April 14 2008 and September 23 this year.

The total number of suspected reactions is 4,657, taken from more than 1.4 million doses given out across the country.

In total, there were 575 reports relating to side effects at the site of the injection, such as swelling and extreme pain, and another 241 allergic reactions, such as rash, swollen face and swollen lips.

A total of 455 reports were linked to "psychogenic effects" such as nausea, panic attacks and fainting while 955 were other recognised effects like headache and sickness. There were 330 reports were suspected reactions not currently recognised, such as palpitations, blurred vision, chest pain and flu-like illness.

The MHRA said on September 23 that the balance of risks and benefits of Cervarix remains positive.