

Media Release

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Third HPV round begins in Bay schools

More than 2000 Bay of Plenty girls and young women will soon be protected against the main viruses that cause cervical cancer.

The third and final round of this year's HPV school vaccination programme for students in Years 8-13 begins on Monday 24 August. More than 60 schools in the Western and Eastern Bay of Plenty are taking part.

The HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine, Gardasil, protects against the main viruses responsible for cervical cancer, and three doses – given over a six month period – are needed to be fully protected.

Bay of Plenty District Health Board HPV schools coordinator Sue Stevens says school visits will continue into next year as many young women are just starting their first doses now.

“We’ll vaccinate students at any time, even if they are just starting their first dose now. We want to make sure as many young women as possible are protected from this terrible disease,” she says.

Sue says her team of nurses can easily make other arrangements for students who are not able to be at school when the HPV nurses are scheduled to visit, and encourages people to call her to discuss any issues.

“We’ll do what we can to make sure everybody who wants the vaccine can get it. It’s really important everyone completes all three doses to be fully protected,” she says.

The cervical cancer vaccine is available free to all girls and young women born after 1 January 1990. Eligible women who have left school can get the vaccine from their GP or health clinic.

HPV is a common virus that is spread most commonly through sexual contact. Four out of five women become infected at some time during their lifetime, and while most infections clear without the person even realising, some can lead to cervical cancer many years later. Vaccinating girls and young women now will reduce their chances of getting cervical cancer later in life.

Every year around 160 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in New Zealand and 60 women die from it.

To talk to an HPV nurse, call 07 579 8158, or 021 242 1918.

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