

Media Release

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Three HPV doses protects Summer

For 19 year-old Summer Bennett, it was a 'pretty simple' choice to get the HPV cervical cancer vaccine – she'd rather be protected than risk contracting the often fatal disease.

"I've seen someone go through the trauma of cervical cancer and it's definitely something I don't want to go through," says Summer.

Now in her first year of a Bachelor of Communication Studies at the University of Waikato, Summer completed her third and final dose of the vaccine, called Gardasil, earlier this year. Friends have also lined up for the vaccine but Summer is concerned many young women are not heeding the message.

"They think it's not going to happen to them, but it could be anybody. I'd rather have three needles in my arm than chemotherapy every day," says Summer. "It's pretty simple, but you have to do it properly – you have to get three doses for the vaccination to be effective."

Since last September the HPV vaccine, which protects against the main viruses responsible for cervical cancer and genital warts, has been available free of charge to girls and young women born after 1 January 1990. A schools programme began this year to vaccinate girls in Years 8-13 but eligible young women who have left school can receive the free vaccine from their doctor or health clinic.

Three doses are needed over six months for the vaccination to be fully effective.

HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) is a very common virus 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.

Every year around 160 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in New Zealand and 60 women die from it. Vaccinating girls and young women now will reduce their chances of getting cervical cancer later in life.

For further information: www.cervicalcancervaccine.govt.nz

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Summer Bennett (19), will be encouraging her niece Maaia Reid-Bennett (10) to get her three doses of cervical cancer vaccine when she reaches Year 8.