

# Media Release

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BAY OF PLENTY  
DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD  
HAUORA A TOI

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## **School HPV programme kicks off for 2010**

BOPDHB nurses are on the move again as the 2010 school HPV vaccination programme began this week at Opotiki primary schools.

HPV schools co-ordinator Sue Stevens says the team is expecting to vaccinate around 500 young women at 55 Bay of Plenty schools for this first round. Three doses of the Gardasil vaccine are needed for young women to be fully protected from Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

The HPV vaccine protects against the main viruses responsible for cervical cancer and genital warts. HPV is a virus spread most commonly through sexual contact, including intimate skin to skin contact.

“This vaccine can protect women from getting cervical cancer later in life so it’s really important young women heed the message – cervical cancer can happen to anyone,” says Sue.

The HPV team will be vaccinating Year 8 girls in the first instance but will also travel to colleges to vaccinate young women who did not take up the vaccine offer in 2009. This will be the last year the team will travel to colleges – from 2011, only Year 8 girls will be able to get the vaccination at school. However the vaccine continues to be freely available to all young women born since 1 January 1990 through their health clinic or GP.

“For many girls, having a sexual partner may be a long way off, but being immunised now will mean they will be protected through the most vulnerable years when they are most at risk of contracting an HPV infection,” says Sue.

She says on-going clinical studies show that after five years, protection against the HPV virus remains high and suggest that protection will last much longer – possibly for life.

She stresses that young women who are already sexually active should still get the vaccine as it is unlikely they would have been exposed to all four viruses the vaccine protects against.

Four out of five women become infected with HPV 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.

Vaccination at other times can be arranged by calling Sue on 021 242 1918 or 07 579 8158 or by email: [sue.stevens@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:sue.stevens@bopdhb.govt.nz).

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