



COUNTY OF SAN NEWS RELEASE

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CHICKEN POX OUTBREAK REPORTED AT DEL MAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ***Five Students Sick; Parents Urged to Ensure Their Children Are Immunized***

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) reports that five students at Sycamore Ridge School (Del Mar Union School District) have been diagnosed with chicken pox.

Four of the students had at least one dose of chicken pox vaccine. One student had two doses. Parents are reminded that two doses of vaccine are recommended.

"Getting the chicken pox vaccine offers protection against getting the disease," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "While no vaccine is 100 percent effective, it usually lessens the symptoms if an individual does contract the disease. We urge parents to check with their physicians to make sure their children are inoculated against chicken pox and other vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles and whooping cough."

None of the students required hospitalization. School officials have informed staff and parents about the outbreak and asked parents to make sure their children have had the appropriate vaccinations against the disease.

Chicken pox is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella virus. The disease is easily spread by coughing, sneezing or contact with chicken pox blisters. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends two doses of chicken pox vaccine for those who do not have immunity -- the first at 12-15 months of age and the second at 4-6 years of age. For those individuals who are older and have only had one vaccination, a second dose is recommended. Ninety-nine percent of people develop immunity after two doses.

Symptoms of chicken pox include a skin rash of blister-like lesions, covering the body but usually more concentrated on the face, scalp, and trunk. The risk of complications increases after puberty and includes bacterial infection of skin lesions, dehydration and pneumonia.

Most, but not all, infected individuals have fever, which develops just before or when the rash appears. If exposed, persons who have been vaccinated against the disease may get a milder illness, with less severe rash (sometimes involving only a few red bumps that look similar to insect bites) and mild or no fever. The incubation period is from 14-16 days from exposure, with a range of 10-21 days. The illness lasts about 5-10 days. For more information on chicken pox and immunizations in general, please call the HHSA Immunization Branch at 619-692-8661 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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