



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 5, 2008

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CHICKEN POX OUTBREAK REPORTED AT SAN DIEGO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL *Five Students Sick; HHSU Urges Parents to Vaccinate Their Children*

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSU) reports that five students at Ericson Elementary School in San Diego have been diagnosed with chicken pox.

The students had all received one dose of chicken pox vaccine. Two doses of vaccine are recommended to guard against contracting chicken pox, or lessen its effects.

"We urge parents to check with their physician to see that their children are inoculated against chicken pox and other vaccine-preventable diseases like measles," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer.

None of the students required hospitalization. School officials informed staff and students who may have been exposed, and recommended that they have 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.

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 10-21 days. The illness lasts about 5-10 days. For more information on chicken pox and immunizations in general, please call the HHSU Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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