



COUNTY OF SAN NEWS RELEASE

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April 25, 2008

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CHICKEN POX OUTBREAK REPORTED AT GROSSMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE 3 Students and 1 Staff Member Sick; HHSU Urges Adults to Get Age-Appropriate Vaccinations

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSU) reports that three students and one staff member at Grossmont Community College have been diagnosed with chicken pox.

The students and staff member do not recall their vaccine history. Two doses of vaccine are recommended to guard against contracting chicken pox, or lessen its effects.

“Chicken pox can be more serious in adults than in children,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “Anyone not vaccinated, or who did not have the disease, is urged to check with their physician to make sure they obtain the chickenpox vaccine and other age-appropriate vaccinations.”

None of the students or staff required hospitalization. School officials are informing staff and students who had close contact with the three students and one staff member about the outbreak and recommending 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 from 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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