



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CHICKEN POX OUTBREAK REPORTED AT CARLSBAD SCHOOL** ***Six Students Ill; Parents Urged to Ensure Their Children Are Immunized***

The San Diego County HHS (Health and Human Services Agency) is working with Carlsbad Unified School District officials to notify parents that their children may have been exposed to chicken pox (varicella). Six students at Calavera Hills Middle School have been diagnosed with chicken pox.

“We are working closely with school officials to identify children who may have been exposed,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “Parents should check with their physicians to make sure their children are inoculated against chicken pox and other preventable diseases.”

Chicken pox (varicella) 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 all people one year of age and older who do not have evidence of immunity for the disease. Ninety-nine percent of people develop immunity after two doses.

The students range in age from 11 to 13 years old. None required hospitalization and four had previously received one chicken pox vaccine. “This is a reminder of how important it is to adhere to the recent recommendations of obtaining two vaccines,” said Dr. Wooten.

School officials have sent e-mails to parents about the outbreak and asked parents to make sure their children have been vaccinated against the disease.

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 HHS Immunization Branch at 619-692-8661 or visit the website at [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org).

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