



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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ELEVEN STUDENTS INFECTED WITH CHICKEN POX AT SOUTH COUNTY SCHOOL *Parents Urged to Have Children Vaccinated Against Disease*

Eleven students at Joseph Casillas Elementary School in Chula Vista have been diagnosed with chicken pox, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) is reporting today.

One third grader, nine fifth graders and one sixth grade student have been diagnosed with chicken pox by a physician. Ten of the infected students had one dose of the chicken pox vaccine. One student had two doses. The total number of students diagnosed with the disease could climb; another 12 students are out of school with rashes not confirmed to be chicken pox.

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.

"Diseases like chicken pox are preventable with vaccination, and we urge parents to ensure their children are inoculated against them," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "Parents should check with their physicians to make sure their children have all the recommended vaccines."

None of the students required hospitalization. School officials informed staff and parents of the students in each affected classroom of the exposure to chicken pox. There are a total of 669 students in the school.

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.

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 incubation period is 10-21 days. The illness lasts about 5-10 days.

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.

For more information on chicken pox and immunizations in general, please call the HHS Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661 or visit www.sdiz.org.

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