



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2009

CONTACT: Tom Christensen (619) 515-6535
CARDIFF SCHOOL CONTACT: Tom Pellegrino (760) 632-5890
LEMON GROVE CONTACT: Ernest Anastos (619) 825-5612
SAN DIEGO UNIFIED CONTACT: Linda Zintz (619) 725-5568

SAN DIEGO COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY REPORTS THREE CHICKENPOX OUTBREAKS AT LOCAL SCHOOLS *Nineteen Students Ill; Parents Urged to Ensure Their Children Are Immunized*

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) reports that seven students at Cardiff Elementary School, six students at Palm Middle School in Lemon Grove and six students at Thurgood Marshall Middle School in the San Diego Unified School District have been diagnosed with Chickenpox (varicella).

Four of the seven students at Cardiff Elementary had received one dose of the Chickenpox vaccine while the other three had not been immunized. At Palm Middle School, five have had one varicella immunization and one was not immunized but had history of the disease. At Thurgood Marshall, all six students had received one dose of vaccination. Two doses of vaccine are recommended.

“We have worked closely with officials at the schools to identify children who may have been exposed,” said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “We urge parents to check with their physicians to make sure their children get two doses of Chickenpox vaccine, and are immunized against other preventable diseases.”

The students at Cardiff Elementary were all first- and second-graders. The students diagnosed at Palm Middle School were 11 to 15 year old students and at Thurgood Marshall there were five sixth-graders and one seventh-grade student. Officials at all three schools have informed parents as well as staff members about the outbreak.

Chickenpox 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 Chickenpox vaccine for all people one year of age and older who do not have evidence of immunity for the disease. The



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2009

recommended schedule is one dose at 12-15 months of age and the second dose at 4 to 6 years of age. Ninety-nine percent of people develop immunity after two doses.

Symptoms of Chickenpox 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 Chickenpox and immunizations in general, please call the HHSA Immunization Branch at 619-692-8661 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

###