



To: Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN) Participants
Date: October 10, 2007

Varicella Outbreak in a Local Elementary School

Five confirmed cases of chickenpox at Cajon Park Elementary School in Santee have been reported to the County of San Diego Immunization Branch (SDIB). Onset dates ranged between 9/20 and 10/8. The cases were between the ages of 4 to 11 years and all had previously received one dose of varicella vaccine. None of the cases were hospitalized.

A rash is usually the first sign of the disease with 1-2 days of fever and malaise preceding the rash. People with chickenpox are contagious for 1-2 days before the rash appears and until all blisters are crusted over (usually 6-10 days). Chickenpox is easily spread by coughing, sneezing or contact with varicella blisters and usually lasts about 5-10 days. Ill people should stay home from school, child care and work until all the blisters are crusted over. The risk for complications is higher in newborns, infants younger than (1) year of age, adults, and for those who may be immunocompromised.

Health care providers are reminded of the following recent recommendations: 1) the first dose of varicella vaccine should be administered at age 12--15 months and the second dose at age 4--6 years; 2) a second catch-up dose should be administered for children, adolescents, and adults who previously had received only 1 dose; 3) all healthy persons aged ≥ 13 years without evidence of immunity should be also receive 2 doses of vaccine. If a child is unimmunized or has not had chickenpox disease, it is recommended that varicella vaccine be given within 3-5 days after exposure to help prevent or modify the severity of the disease. Ninety-nine percent of people develop immunity after two doses. The vaccine almost always protects against severe disease.

Single cases of fatal or hospitalized varicella, as well as outbreaks of 5 or more cases, are reportable to the SDIB. For more information about chickenpox, other vaccine-preventable diseases and the shots that protect against them, please call the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Immunization Branch at (619) 692-8661 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

Thank you for your continued participation.

Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN)

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