



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Tom Christensen (619) 515-6535
SCHOOL CONTACT: Karyl O'Brien (760) 291-3237

CHICKENPOX OUTBREAK REPORTED AT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL ***Four Students Ill; Parents Urged to Ensure Their Children Are Immunized***

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) reports that four students at Valley High School in the Escondido Union High School District have been diagnosed with chickenpox (varicella). One student had one dose of chickenpox vaccine. The immunization history for the other three students is not known.

Three of the students that have been diagnosed are 11th graders and one is a senior. The school has sent letters notifying all of its students and staff about the outbreak.

"Chickenpox is a preventable disease and getting both doses of chickenpox vaccine is the best way to prevent becoming ill," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "Vaccination can prevent the spread of the disease and associated complications."

This is the second chickenpox outbreak in San Diego County schools this year. There have been a total of ten students involved in the outbreaks. In 2009, there were ten outbreaks involving 69 cases.

Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella virus. The disease is easily spread by coughing, sneezing or contact with chickenpox 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. 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 HHS Immunization Branch at 619-692-8661 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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