



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

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CHICKENPOX OUTBREAK REPORTED AT ESCONDIDO SCHOOL *Health Officials Urge Parents to Vaccinate Their Children*

Six students at San Pasqual High School in the Escondido Union School District have been diagnosed with chickenpox (varicella), according to San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) officials.

The children diagnosed include two 15-year-olds, three 16-year-olds and a 17-year-old. Two of the students are in 10th grade and four are in 11th grade. One of the children had one immunization, one had the recommended two doses of the varicella vaccine and the other four were unimmunized. The school has sent letters notifying its students and staff about the outbreak.

"Chickenpox is a preventable disease," said Eric McDonald, M.D., M.P.H., County Deputy Public Health Officer. "We want to remind parents that by having their children immunized with both doses of the vaccine, they can help their children avoid chickenpox or have a milder form of the disease."

This is the second school outbreak in 2011 for a total of 11 cases. There were 22 cases in four school clusters during 2010.

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. Children should be vaccinated at 12-15 months of age and receive the second dose at 4-6 years of age.

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 and mild or no fever. The incubation period is generally 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 (866) 358-2966 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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