



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 26, 2009

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CHICKEN POX CASES REPORTED AT SCHOOL IN MIRA MESA ***Five Children Sick; HHSU Urges Parents to Get Their Children Vaccinated***

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSU) reports that five students at Mira Mesa Christian School have been diagnosed with chicken pox.

All five students had one dose of vaccine. Two doses of vaccine are recommended to guard against contracting chicken pox, or lessen its effects.

"Getting vaccinated can prevent or lessen the effects of chicken pox and other diseases," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. "We recommend that parents talk to their children's healthcare provider about obtaining age-appropriate vaccinations, including chicken pox, measles and whooping cough, for their children."

None of the students required hospitalization. School officials have informed staff and parents of students who may have been exposed, and recommended that children have the appropriate vaccinations against the disease.

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. 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. A second dose is recommended for individuals who are older and have only had one vaccination.

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 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 10-21 days. The illness lasts about 5-10 days. For more information on chicken pox and immunizations in general, please call the HHSU Immunization Branch at 619-692-8661 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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