



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

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

Five students at Hill Creek Elementary School in the Santee School District have been diagnosed with chickenpox (varicella), according to San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) officials.

The children diagnosed include a 10-year-old and four 8-year-olds, all in different classes. One of the children was unimmunized and one child had one immunization. The other three had the recommended two doses of the varicella vaccine. The school has sent letters notifying its students and staff about the outbreak.

"We want to remind residents that chickenpox is a preventable disease. By getting both doses of the vaccine, parents can help their children avoid chickenpox or have a milder form of the disease," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer.

This is the first chickenpox outbreak in San Diego County schools this year. Last year there were 22 cases of chickenpox in four school clusters. In 2009, there were 10 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. 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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