



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **CHICKENPOX OUTBREAKS REPORTED IN ESCONDIDO** *Ten Students Ill at Two Unrelated Sites*

Seven students at the Escondido Community Child Development Center and three students at Escondido High School in the Escondido Union High School District have been diagnosed with chickenpox (varicella), according to San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) officials. There is no known connection between the cases at the two sites.

At the Child Development Center, the children diagnosed are aged 4 months, 6 months, 8 months, one year, 13 months and 15 months. Six of the children were unimmunized and one child had one immunization. There are 42 unimmunized children that have been exposed in two classrooms and are being excluded from daycare until Oct. 25.

The three students at Escondido High School are ages 15, 16 and 17. One of those students had one immunization and two of them had two immunizations. The school has sent letters notifying all of its students and staff about the outbreak.

"Getting both doses of chickenpox vaccine is the best way to prevent becoming ill. Chickenpox is a preventable disease," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer.

These are the third and fourth chickenpox outbreaks in San Diego County schools this year. There have been 20 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. 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 619-692-8661 or visit the website at [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org).