

## VARICELLA

Varicella, commonly known as chickenpox, is a very contagious illness caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), a member of the herpesvirus group. Symptoms, including fever and an itchy, generalized rash, usually begin 14-16 days after exposure. The rash often begins a day or two after onset of fever and progresses from maculopapular to vesicular to crusted over within a few days. Lesions from all stages of development are often present at the same time, with total recovery usually within a week.

Transmission is person-to-person through direct contact with lesions or respiratory secretions, or through aerosolization of vesicular fluid. Persons are communicable from one to two days prior to symptom onset until all lesions are crusted over.

Recovery from primary varicella infection usually confers lifetime immunity, especially among otherwise healthy persons. However, the virus can persist in the body as a latent infection, which may be reactivated later as herpes zoster (shingles). Those at increased risk for more severe disease, including complications, are infants, adolescents, adults, pregnant women, and immunocompromised persons.

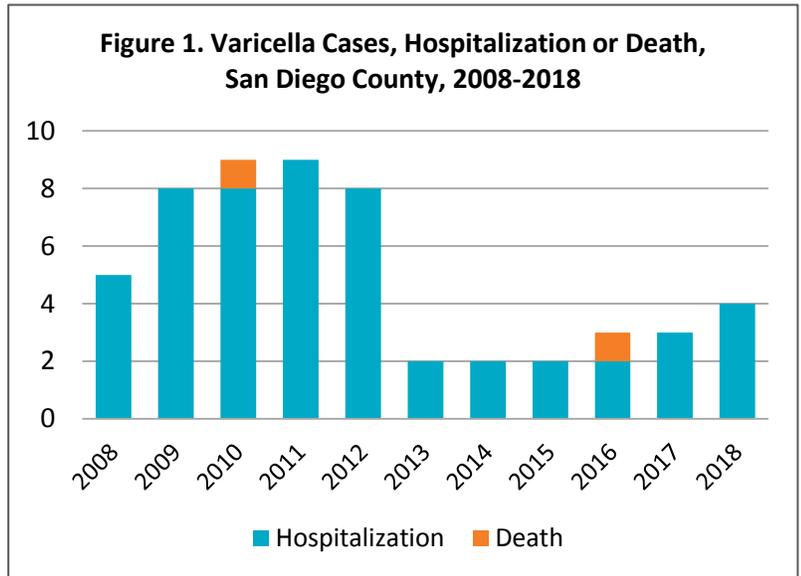
Prior to the introduction of a highly effective vaccine in 1995, varicella infection was a nearly universal childhood disease in the United States, with nearly 80% of all cases occurring in children aged 1-9. Varicella morbidity has declined by over 90% with routine childhood vaccination, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Breakthrough varicella](#) infection can occur among the vaccinated, but usually causes mild illness, which makes it increasingly difficult to diagnose on the basis of clinical symptoms alone.

Varicella infection is not reportable in all states, so national numbers are not complete. However, in 2017, 8,775 cases were reported to CDC. In California, only infections resulting in hospitalization or death are reportable. Between 2014-2018, there were 227 such cases reported in California, including seven deaths. During the same period in San Diego County, there were 14 cases, including one death.

### Resources

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Chickenpox \(Varicella\) website](#)
- [Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases \(the Pink Book\) – Varicella](#)
- [Varicella ACIP Vaccine Recommendations website](#)
- [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) Varicella \(Chickenpox\) website](#)
- [CDPH Varicella Quicksheet for post-exposure prophylaxis management](#)

Despite the successes, challenges remain. Although less common, infections, including those causing severe outcomes, still occur, particularly among unvaccinated populations. Because varicella is so contagious, it can quickly spread in settings where people are in close proximity, such as schools, jails, shelters, and healthcare settings. Between 2014-2018, six outbreaks were reported in San Diego County, all in schools or childcare settings. A varicella outbreak is currently occurring among migrants presenting at the Mexico-California border.



Data are provisional and subject to change as additional information becomes available. Grouped by CDC disease years. Varicella cases are only reportable in California when there is a hospitalization or death.

The Monthly Communicable Disease Surveillance Report is a publication of the County of San Diego Public Health Services Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch (EISB). EISB identifies, investigates, registers, and evaluates communicable, reportable, and emerging diseases and conditions to protect the health of the community. The purpose of this report is to present trends in communicable disease in San Diego County. To subscribe to this report, send an email to [EpiDiv.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:EpiDiv.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov).

# MONTHLY COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORT

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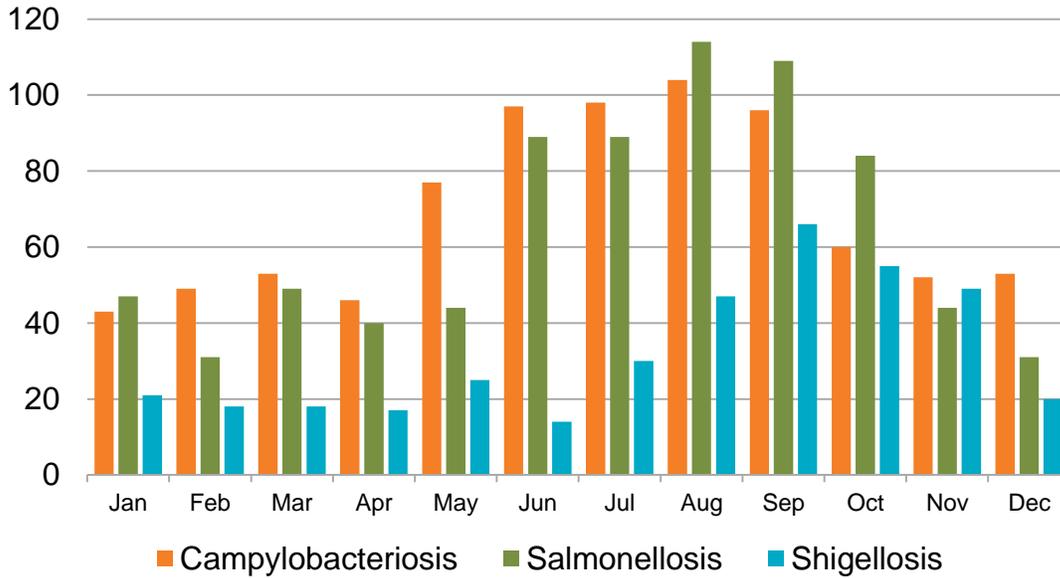


Table 1. Select Reportable Diseases		2018			Prior Years	
		Current Month	Prior Month	2018 Total	Average Prior 3 Years	2017 Total
Disease and Case Inclusion Criteria (C,P,S)						
Amebiasis	C	0	2	10	17.0	10
Botulism (Foodborne, Infant, Wound, Other)	C,P	0	1	11	4.7	8
Brucellosis	C,P	0	0	1	3.3	5
Campylobacteriosis	C,P	53	52	828	774.0	883
Chickenpox, Hospitalization or Death	C,P	0	2	4	2.7	3
Chikungunya	C,P	0	0	5	7.0	2
Coccidioidomycosis	C	10	23	281	214.7	313
Cryptosporidiosis	C,P	5	7	89	38.0	54
Dengue Virus Infection	C,P	0	2	8	17.3	12
Encephalitis, All	C	10	2	52	66.3	43
Giardiasis	C,P	10	8	226	345.0	317
Hepatitis A, Acute	C	2	1	35	207.7	576
Hepatitis B, Acute	C	1	0	8	9.3	13
Hepatitis B, Chronic	C,P	60	85	875	868.3	868
Hepatitis C, Acute	C,P	0	0	1	2.3	4
Hepatitis C, Chronic	C,P	291	284	4,181	2,869.3	3,113
Legionellosis	C	12	2	53	56.3	66
Listeriosis	C	0	1	13	15.7	15
Lyme Disease	C,P	1	1	17	15.3	21
Malaria	C	0	2	7	9.7	8
Measles (Rubeola)	C	0	0	0	3.3	2
Meningitis, Aseptic/Viral	C,P,S	4	9	127	182.7	187
Meningitis, Bacterial	C,P,S	2	1	36	40.0	39
Meningitis, Other/Unknown	C	2	0	14	31.3	34
Meningococcal Disease	C,P	0	0	11	2.0	1
Mumps	C,P	0	0	9	12.7	15
Pertussis	C,P,S	22	45	632	829.3	1,161
Rabies, Animal	C	0	0	7	9.7	16
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	C,P	0	0	1	2.7	3
Salmonellosis (Non-Typhoid/Non-Paratyphoid)	C,P	31	44	771	566.3	576
Shiga toxin-Producing <i>E. coli</i> (including O157)	C,P	9	13	160	131.3	288
Shigellosis	C,P	20	49	380	254.0	334
Typhoid Fever	C,P	2	0	4	4.7	2
Vibriosis	C,P	2	2	57	42.7	50
West Nile Virus Infection	C,P	0	1	3	22.7	2
Yersiniosis	C,P	3	3	26	27.0	54
Zika Virus	C,P	0	0	7	35.3	21

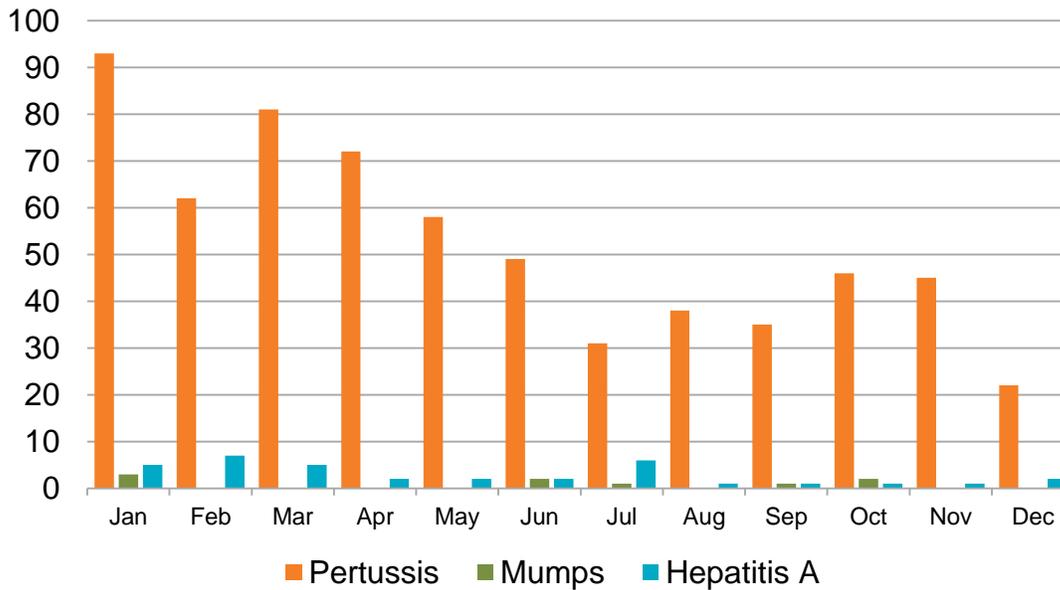
**Case counts are provisional and subject to change as additional information becomes available.** Cases are grouped into calendar months and calendar years on the basis of the earliest of the following dates: onset, lab specimen collection, diagnosis, death, and report received. Counts may differ from previously or subsequently reported counts due to differences in inclusion or grouping criteria, late reporting, or updated case information. Inclusion criteria (C,P,S = Confirmed, Probable, Suspect) based on Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CSTE/CDC) surveillance case criteria.



**Figure 2. Select Enteric Infections by Month  
January 2018 – December 2018**

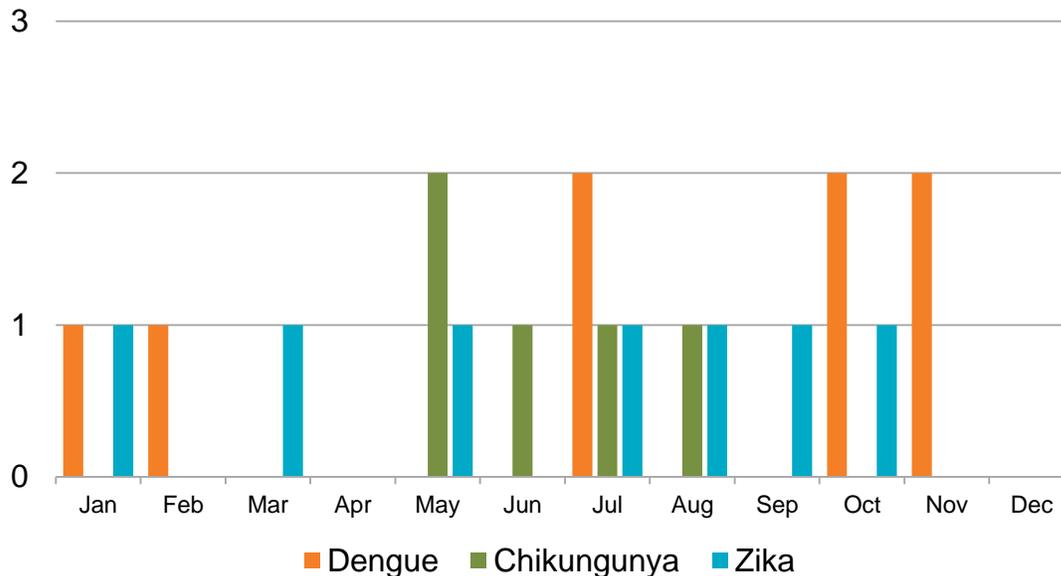


**Figure 3. Select Vaccine-Preventable Infections by Month  
January 2018 – December 2018**



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**Figure 4. Select Vector-Borne Infections by Month  
January 2018 – December 2018**



All of these dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus cases are travel-associated. For additional information on Zika cases, see the [HHSA Zika Virus webpage](#). **Case counts are provisional and subject to change as additional information becomes available.** Cases are grouped into calendar months and calendar years on the basis of the earliest of the following dates: onset, lab specimen collection, diagnosis, death, and report received. Counts may differ from previously or subsequently reported counts due to differences in inclusion or grouping criteria, late reporting, or updated case information. Inclusion criteria (C,P,S = Confirmed, Probable, Suspect) based on Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CSTE/CDC) surveillance case criteria.

### Disease Reporting in San Diego County

San Diego County communicable disease surveillance is a collaborative effort among Public Health Services, hospitals, medical providers, laboratories, and the [San Diego Health Connect](#) Health Information Exchange (HIE). The data presented in this report are the result of this effort.

Reporting is crucial for disease surveillance and detection of disease outbreaks. Under the California Code of Regulations, Title 17 (Sections [2500](#), [2505](#), and [2508](#)), public health professionals, medical providers, laboratories, schools, and others are mandated to report more than 80 diseases or conditions to San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency.

To report a communicable disease, contact the Epidemiology Program by phone at (619) 692-8499 or download and print a Confidential Morbidity Report form and fax it to (858) 715-6458. For urgent matters on evenings, weekends or holidays, dial (858) 565-5255 and ask for the Epidemiology Program duty officer. For more information, including a complete list of reportable diseases and conditions in California, visit the Epidemiology Program website, [www.sdepi.org](http://www.sdepi.org).

Tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV disease are covered by other programs within Public Health Services. For information about reporting and data related to these conditions, search for the relevant program on the Public Health Services website, <http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs.html>.