



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH EXPOSURE NOTICE

November 22, 2011

**Communicable Disease Incident: Outbreak of Chickenpox (Varicella)
Principal Public Health Nurse: Naomi Lobell, 454-4114**

IF YOU SUSPECT THAT YOU HAVE CHICKENPOX DISEASE, NOTIFY YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE BEFORE GOING TO THE OFFICE.

INCIDENT

- Public Health was notified of a student with chickenpox who attends UCSC. Other students may have been exposed starting November 17, 2011. Students who become ill with chicken pox would develop symptoms from December 1st through December 8th.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be on high alert for the first signs of chickenpox (i.e. fever and not feeling well). Any student experiencing the first signs of chickenpox should NOT attend classes to prevent further spread of the illness during the infectious period.
- If you suspect you have chicken pox, contact the Student Health Center at 459-2398.
- All persons with chicken pox should be restricted from school until no longer infectious, i.e. the lesions are crusted over, usually about 5 days from the rash onset.
- It is **strongly recommended that all students** who have not been vaccinated against chicken pox receive a dose of the Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine.
- It is **strongly recommended that all students** who have received one dose of the vaccine receive a **second dose**, which will offer them further protection.
- **Immunocompromised individuals** who have been exposed to chickenpox should contact their health care provider for evaluation. It is possible that they may need to be excluded from school to avoid serious illness.
- **Pregnant women** who have not had the illness or the vaccine should contact their health care provider.

INFORMATION

- Chickenpox is spread through direct contact with nasal/oral/lesion secretions, or by airborne spread of these fluids from someone with chickenpox. On average, it takes 14-16 days to develop chickenpox symptoms after being exposed, although it can take up to 21 days.
- The symptoms of chickenpox start with a mild fever and a general sense of "not feeling well" followed by an itchy rash that sometimes forms blisters. The contagious period is 1-2 days before the rash starts until all the sores are dry and crusted, usually 5 days after the rash starts.

- Even if you have received one dose of the Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, you may still become infected with “breakthrough” chickenpox. This illness is usually much milder although it is still considered contagious.
- People whose immune systems are compromised (leukemia, cancer therapy, HIV infection etc.) are at risk for serious complications if they are infected with chickenpox.
- If a pregnant woman develops chickenpox, this could seriously affect her health or the health of her baby.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- If you are unable to obtain a Varicella immunization from your usual health care provider, immunizations are available at the Santa Cruz County Immunization Clinics from 1pm-4:30pm at 1080 Emeline Ave., Santa Cruz or 9 Crestview Drive, Watsonville. The fee for children under 19 years of age is \$15. Private insurance is not accepted at the county clinics.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/list_varicl.htm
- California Department of Public Health - - www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Varicella.aspx

The Santa Cruz County Public Health / Communicable Disease Unit is committed to protecting the health and safety of our residents. We strive to provide quality service while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of our clients. Public Health observes standard confidentiality protocols and will not release identifying information to compromise the privacy of individuals involved in this investigation.