



# CHICKENPOX (Varicella) SCHOOL FACT SHEET

## ATTENTION

Please contact the Berkeley Public Health Division if your school is experiencing more than one case (981-5300).

### EXCLUSION

- Until ALL blisters have dried into scabs and no new blisters have started within the last 24 hours.

### CAUSE

- Varicella-zoster virus (member of the herpesvirus family)

### SYMPTOMS

- Very itchy rash (small red pimples that turn in to blisters) that begins on the chest and back, and spreads to the face, hands and legs
- Occasionally a mild fever and runny nose
- Those who have been vaccinated may get a milder rash (just a few red bumps that resemble an insect bite) and mild to no fever.

### SPREAD

- Direct contact with blister fluid or secretions from the nose and/or mouth of infected person
- Occasionally spread through droplets from sneezes or coughs

### CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

- 1-2 days before rash begins until ALL blisters have crusted or scabbed over

### PREVENTION OR CONTROL

- Vaccination with the Varicella vaccine; School-age children who have not had chickenpox should receive two doses.
- NOTE: Children and adults with weakened immune systems should not receive the varicella vaccine.
- **WASH HANDS** with warm, soapy water after coming contact with secretions from blisters or from the nose and mouth of an infected person.

### WHAT TO DO

- See your doctor if you have any of the above symptoms.
- If you have been exposed and are susceptible (not vaccinated) see your doctor immediately. Getting a varicella vaccine within 3 days may prevent you from getting the chickenpox.
- Pregnant women and persons with weakened immune systems who have not been vaccinated should contact their doctor immediately.
- NOTE: **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN** or other Salicylate containing medication to children or adolescents under the age of 18 years. This could lead to a serious condition called Reye's Syndrome.

References: AAP (2006). *Red Book: 2006 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*.  
CDC (2007). *Vaccines and Preventable Diseases: Varicella (Chickenpox) In-Short*.  
CDC (2007). *Vaccines and Preventable Diseases: Varicella Treatment Questions and Answers*.  
Hennepin County Community Health Department (2003). *Chickenpox (Varicella)*.