North Monterey County Unified School District

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CHICKEN POX [VARICELLA] - FACT SHEET

CAUSE and DEFINITION:

- Chicken pox is an illness with fever and rash that is caused by the *varicella-zoster* virus.

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Rash: small, red spots and bumps that blister over 3-4 days, and then scab
- Blisters emerge over several days, so many blisters that are in different stages are common
- Blisters more often begin on the trunk than on exposed areas of the body
- Blisters can occur inside mouth, ears, genital areas and scalp
- Rash is accompanied by fever, runny nose and sometimes a cough.

INCUBATION / CONTAGION

- Once infected, it takes anywhere from 10 days to 3 weeks to get symptoms
- The most contagious period is when rash is spreading and the day before the rash appears.
- Once all blisters have scabs and no new blisters are forming, the period of contagion has ended.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION & CONTROL

- Highly contagious. Even sharing the same airflow can pass along the infection.
- Direct contact with blisters, coughing can also cause this
- It is possible to get chicken pox if there is direct contact with someone who has an uncovered shingles sore.

CONTROL

- All students and staff should be vaccinated unless there has been adequate documentation that someone has had the disease.
- Vaccine is normally given at age 12 months, with one booster shot at age 4-6 years.
- Good hand washing hygiene and usual surface sanitation

HOME MANAGEMENT

- Call your child's physician to describe symptoms and determine if your child needs to be seen, and recommended home treatment ; and:
    - If your child has severe immune as their doctor may wish to give immune globulin).
    - Adults family members who may have been exposed and are not vaccinated (especially those who are or may be pregnant) should be notified and suggest that they check with their health provider about what to do.
- Keep child home if he/she has the "characteristic" rash: **small, red spots and bumps that blister over 3-4 days, and then scab**, until the rash has crusted over (usually 6 days after onset of rash). Note: It's possible for children to get chickenpox even after being vaccinated.
- Varicella vaccine can prevent chicken pox. Contact your family's physician for more information if you have family members who have not received the Varicella vaccine.
- Good hand washing hygiene