

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Chickenpox Exposure in Southwest Nebraska

McCook – Chickenpox has been reported to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD). “Chickenpox (varicella-zoster) is a virus best known for making its victims itch from the rash of fluid-filled blisters it causes,” shares Melissa Propp, RN, SWNPHD Surveillance Nurse. “Chickenpox is extremely contagious and can catch up with anyone who’s not received the vaccine.”

Before the vaccine was available, about 100 people in the U.S. died each year from chicken pox according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Chicken pox is very limited in the United States now thanks in part to the vaccine.

Chickenpox is an “air, surface, and touch of the person” attacker. The cough or sneeze of an infected person sends droplets into the air and onto surfaces. Others then take in the virus through their mouth or nose. Scratching the itchy lesions may also send the virus into the air and infect people, as well as touching the person who is not scabbed over. Washing your hands often with soap and water is a good prevention tool.

Some chicken pox facts:

- A person with chicken pox is contagious one to two days before the rash starts.
- They are contagious up to seven days after the rash/spots appear until all blisters have formed scabs (usually 5-7 days).
- The challenge is that you could be exposed to chicken pox and “not know it.”
- Along with the rash, a fever is usually present with loss of appetite, headache and tiredness.
- Spots/rash usually appear 10-21 days after exposure but can appear as early as seven days or as late as 28 days.
- If you think you or your child has chicken pox, call your doctor as there are medications that can help ease the discomfort.

“We encourage everyone to ensure their children receive the chickenpox vaccine,” explains Propp. “Once someone has chickenpox, years later they can have a very painful disease called shingles.” Either shot is available at SWNPHD. Call Propp at 308-345-4223 to make an appointment.

For more information, contact Propp at nurse@swhealth.ne.gov. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th (one block north of Arby’s) in McCook or 501 Broadway in Imperial (Moreland building 5th Street entrance). More information can also be found on our website at www.swhealth.ne.gov. You can also follow us on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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