

News Release

For Immediate Release

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You Can Prevent Chickenpox and Shingles

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages parents to make sure that their child is up to date on their chickenpox vaccine (varicella).

Chickenpox is a very preventable disease since the introduction of the varicella vaccine in 1995. This vaccine is very effective, with over 90% protection against chickenpox after two doses. The first dose is typically given between 12 and 15 months of age. The second dose is given between ages 4 and 6, usually around the start of kindergarten.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), before the vaccine was available, about 4 million people got chickenpox each year in the United States, over 10,500 of those people were hospitalized, and about 100-150 people died each year.

“Once someone has chickenpox, years later they can have a very painful disease called shingles,” explains Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “There is a vaccine for both chickenpox and shingles. It is better to be vaccinated than be unprotected from these potentially painful and serious diseases.”

Chickenpox spreads easily, mainly when a person touches or breathes in the virus particles that come from chickenpox blisters. It can also spread through tiny droplets that get into the air when someone who has chickenpox breathes or talks. Symptoms usually start within 2 to 3 weeks after being exposed to the virus. Chickenpox can be spread 1 to 2 days before the infected person gets a rash, and they stay contagious until all the blisters have formed scabs, typically 5 to 7 days after the rash starts.

Contact your health care provider to find out if your child is up to date on their chickenpox vaccines, or to find out if you are eligible for shingles vaccine. If you have questions about these shots or other immunizations, contact Melissa Propp, RN, Clinic Manager at (308) 345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov.

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