

Varicella (Chickenpox): Reporting and Outbreak Recommendations for Childcare and School Facilities



Surveillance

Individual cases of chickenpox are reportable in the state of Georgia and should be reported to 1-866-PUB-HLTH or the local health department.

Outbreak Control Recommendations

An outbreak of chickenpox in a childcare or school setting is defined as:

- ≥ 3 cases within a 3 week period of time (21 days) in persons of any age

When an outbreak is recognized:

1. Contact your District Health Department immediately. For a list of local health departments go to: <http://health.state.ga.us/epi/disease/districts.asp>
2. Begin logging information on the varicella outbreak report form. Collect name, dob, date of rash onset, vaccination status, disease severity and classroom for every case.
3. Collaborate with Public Health to exclude all varicella cases (primary or breakthrough) until there are no new lesions appearing within 24 hours (usually 4–7 days after rash onset).
4. Identify susceptible students and staff who are at high risk for developing severe disease or at high risk for complications.

- ✓ Unvaccinated persons
- ✓ Persons with unknown vaccination status
- ✓ Immunocompromised persons
- ✓ Susceptible pregnant females

- Inform them about their risks
- Recommend vaccination (unless contraindicated)

- Recommend that they contact their healthcare provider. The provider can determine whether the following are necessary:

- ✓ Immune status testing
- ✓ Postexposure prophylaxis for those who are at high risk for severe disease and complications without immunity

- Collaborate with Public Health to exclude susceptible students and staff
5. Notify parents and school staff
 - Send a letter home to parents notifying them of the outbreak
 - Provide information about chickenpox including:

- ✓ The availability of the vaccine
- ✓ The potential for varicella to cause severe complications, especially in those who are high risk

- Recommend a second dose of varicella vaccine for students and staff with no disease history or with a history of only one dose of varicella vaccine (provided the appropriate interval has passed since the first dose).
6. Report all students with primary or breakthrough varicella on the outbreak report form.
 7. Obtain specimens for lab confirmation (Note: A specimen is not required from each ill student; a sample from 2 or 3 students is all that is necessary to confirm the outbreak).
 8. Collaborate with Public Health to determine when excluded students and staff may return to school.
 9. The outbreak is deemed ended when no new cases occur within 3 weeks (21 days) from the date the last case is considered to be infectious.

* Note that the steps are not ordered by priority since several of these steps are conducted simultaneously *

Have questions?

<http://health.state.ga.us/epi/vpd/varicella.asp>

