

February 2, 2012

Dear Parent / Guardian / Staff Member:

This letter is to inform you that Varicella (chickenpox) has been reported in one specific student case at Hopatcong High School. I am informing you of this single instance as a precaution. We have no reason to believe this may become widespread but wanted all of you to be aware of this development. Here are some facts concerning Varicella:

Any exposed person who has NOT been vaccinated for chickenpox or has NOT had the disease is considered susceptible (unprotected) and may develop and spread chickenpox to other susceptible persons.

Evidence-based findings have suggested that prior vaccination with the Varicella vaccine in some individuals does not provide lifetime immunity. Receiving a booster of the Varicella vaccine is an issue that should be discussed with your primary health care provider. Chicken pox presentation in previously immunized individuals is often significantly less severe with fewer "pox". Chickenpox is a very contagious disease caused by a virus. It is easily spread through the air by sneezing and coughing or through contact with someone's chickenpox sores. This virus usually infects younger children; however, older children and adults can also become infected if they haven't already had chickenpox or been vaccinated. Early symptoms may include aching, fever, and sore throat. Then a very itchy skin rash develops that may turn into as many as 400-500 sores.

Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine is routinely recommended for all children 12 months of age and older and for unvaccinated persons following exposure to or contact with someone with chickenpox. If Varicella vaccine is given within 72 hours of exposure to chickenpox, it may prevent or reduce the severity of the disease. If your child is susceptible, or if you are unsure, please call your child's health care provider to discuss vaccination. If your child has never had the disease or been vaccinated:

- Watch your child for the next 10 days to 3 weeks to see if a rash develops.
- If your child should develop a rash, do not send your child to school. Contact your child's health care provider so he/she can diagnose the illness and give you instructions for care.
- A child with chickenpox can return to school 6 days after the rash began or when all the sores are dry and crusted over.

Susceptible household members or other close contacts who are pregnant or have a weakened immune system should inform their health care provider that they have been exposed to chickenpox. Babies born to mothers who develop chickenpox while pregnant may develop serious complications.

Please contact your primary health care provider or school nurse with any questions or concerns regarding Varicella (chicken pox).

Sincerely,
Dr. Charles Maranzano, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools