

Spike in chickenpox cases in El Dorado County

Health officials in El Dorado County are seeing an increase in cases of chickenpox in the community and recommend parents ensure their children are fully immunized.

“Two doses of the chickenpox vaccine are recommended for full protection,” Olivia Kasirye, El Dorado County health officer, said in a statement.

Although it isn’t uncommon to see a few cases of chickenpox each year in El Dorado County, two schools have seen a spike in cases in the past two weeks. Sierra Ridge Middle School in Pollock Pines has had 12 reported cases of chickenpox among students and Camino School in Camino has had four reported cases.



Olivia
Kasirye

“All of the cases have been mild,” Kasirye said. “However, we know that chickenpox can be spread easily and that the illness can be more serious in some individuals, particularly very young children, pregnant women, and people with immune compromised systems.”

Chickenpox, caused by the varicella virus, is spread by direct contact or through the air by coughing or sneezing. Symptoms include a mild fever and tiredness, followed by a rash that causes blistering skin lesions.

Health officials from the El Dorado County Health Services Department are working closely with the schools that have reported the chickenpox cases, and information has been sent to parents of children attending the schools.

“Any student who has chickenpox or symptoms of chickenpox should stay home or be sent home from school,” Kasirye said.

A system is currently in place in the county for school nurses to routinely report unusual illness patterns among students to the Health Services Department, Public Health Division.

The risk of contracting chickenpox can be greatly reduced through vaccination. Parents are advised to check their child’s vaccination records and ensure their child has received the vaccination.

“Although one dose of chickenpox vaccine is required by the state for admittance to school, recent studies have shown that two doses provide the best possible protection,” Kasirye said.

Most pediatricians offer the chickenpox vaccine as part of a schedule of other childhood vaccinations. The Health Services Department also offers the vaccine for children by appointment. To schedule an appointment, call (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

Additional information about chickenpox can be found at www.edcgov.us/publichealth.