

CHICKENPOX (VARICELLA) ALERT (February 9, 2016)
IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MERRILL MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It causes a skin rash of itchy, blister-like lesions all over the body. Often there is a fever before the rash. The illness lasts about 5-10 days. Chickenpox is not usually serious, but can cause severe symptoms in high-risk persons such as infants, pregnant women who are not immune to chickenpox, persons who have weakened immune systems because of illness or medications, and persons with long-term skin or lung disorders.

Chickenpox is very **contagious**. It spreads easily from person to person through the air by coughing and sneezing or by direct contact with the fluid from a chickenpox lesion. It usually takes **14-16 days** to develop chickenpox symptoms after being exposed to someone with chickenpox, but symptoms can appear **10-21 days** after exposure.

Vaccination

Two doses of chicken pox vaccine are recommended for children 12 months of age or older who have not had the disease and vaccination is required for public school attendance. Some persons who have received the vaccine may still get chicken pox, but the illness is usually milder. The rash is less severe (sometimes only a few red bumps that look like insect bites) and there may be no fever.

Chicken pox vaccine given within three days of exposure to the disease, and possibly up to five days after exposure, may prevent chicken pox or reduce the severity of disease. We strongly recommend that you have your child vaccinated as soon as possible to protect them.

Recommendations-

- If your child is not protected by vaccination or has never had chicken pox, your child may be excluded from school during outbreaks of chickenpox
- Children with proof of completed vaccination may return to school
- If you do not wish to vaccinate your child, ask your doctor to do a titer test. Please provide the test results to the school so that your child may attend school
- Contact your child's doctor as soon as possible to get chicken pox vaccine for your child if they have not had chickenpox disease or have not received 2 doses of vaccine
- Contact your local health department about vaccination if your child does not have a health care provider
- If your child develops chickenpox, he/she should not attend childcare or school until the rash has crusted over. Please tell school/childcare staff that your child has chickenpox

Sincerely,



Dr. William Burman
Director, Denver Public Health