

Epi Watch

Volume 2, Issue 8

August 2008

Disease of the Month: Chickenpox

What is Varicella (chickenpox)?

Chickenpox is an infectious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus, which results in a blister-like rash, itching, tiredness, and fever.

How do you get chickenpox?

- Chickenpox is highly infectious and spreads from person to person by direct contact or through the air from an infected person's coughing or sneezing, or from aerosolization of virus from skin lesions.
- A person with chickenpox is contagious 1-2 days before the rash appears and until all blisters have formed scabs.
- It takes from 10-21 days after exposure for someone to develop chickenpox.

Can you get chickenpox if you have been vaccinated?

- **Yes**
- About 15%-20% of people who have received one dose of chickenpox vaccine still get

chickenpox if they are exposed, but their disease is usually mild.

- Vaccinated persons who get chickenpox generally have fewer than 50 spots or bumps, which may resemble bug bites more than typical, fluid-filled chickenpox blisters.

What are the symptoms of chickenpox?

In unvaccinated children, chickenpox most commonly causes an illness that lasts about 5 to 10 days. Children usually miss 5 or 6 days of school or childcare due to chickenpox and have symptoms such as:

- High fever,
- Severe itching,
- Uncomfortable rash,
- Dehydration, and
- Headache.

In addition, about 1 in 10 unvaccinated children who get the disease will have a

complication from chickenpox serious enough to visit a health-care provider. These complications include

- Infected skin lesions or other infections,
- Dehydration from vomiting or diarrhea,
- Pneumonia, and/or
- Encephalitis.

In vaccinated children, chickenpox illness is typically mild, producing no symptoms at all other than a few red bumps. However, about 25 to 30% of vaccinated children who get the disease will develop illness as serious as unvaccinated children.

Who is at risk chickenpox?

Anyone can get chickenpox although, certain groups of people are more likely to have more severe illness with serious complications. These include:

- Adults,
- Infants,
- Adolescents, and
- People who are immunocompromised.



Extensive varicella rash of child

TIPS: Preventing the Spread of Chickenpox

Chickenpox can be prevented in most people with the recommended two-doses of varicella vaccine. Staying away from those infected with chickenpox can also reduce the risk of getting the illness.

If you do get chickenpox your doctor will advise you on the types of treatment that are available. Medications such as, antiviral drugs, are recommended for persons who are more likely to

develop serious disease, including persons with chronic skin or lung disease, otherwise healthy individuals 13 years of age or older, and persons receiving steroid therapy.

It would be necessary to go to the doctor if you or your child has a fever that lasts longer than 4 days or rises above 102°F call your doctor. You should also call if:

- Any areas of the rash or any

part of the body become very red, warm or tender or begin leaking pus,

- If the person with chickenpox seems extremely ill, is difficult to wake up, or appears confused,
- Has difficulty walking,
- Has a stiff neck,
- Is vomiting repeatedly,
- Has difficulty breathing, or
- Has a severe cough.



TULSA HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Special Points of Interest

For more information on receiving the recommended varicella vaccine contact the Tulsa Health Department Immunizations program at (918) 582-9355.

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CURRENT NEWS

CDC is continuing to investigate an ongoing multistate outbreak of human *Salmonella* serotype Saintpaul infections. At present, information through epidemiologic investigation and laboratory testing indicates that jalapeño peppers and serrano peppers grown, harvested, or packed in Mexico are the cause of some clusters and are major food vehicles for the outbreak. Although tomatoes currently on the market are safe, raw tomatoes consumed early in the outbreak are still under investigation. Since April, 1,330 persons infected with *Salmonella* Saintpaul have been identified in 43 states the District of Columbia and Canada. For more information about Salmonella and the symptoms associated with it visit our website at www.tulsa-health.org or visit www.cdc.gov.



Incidence of cases of infection *Salmonella* Saintpaul, by state as of 8/3/08. To view a larger image [click here](#).

The Tulsa Health Department collects Emergency Room chief complaint data to monitor the emergence of illnesses, such as influenza, in our community. For additional information on THD's county-wide surveillance system go to www.tulsabiowatch.com

REPORTED CASES OF SELECTED DISEASES

Disease	Tulsa County		Oklahoma	
	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2008	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2007	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2008	Cases Reported Year-to-Date 2007
<i>Campylobacter</i>	29	26	214	304
<i>E. coli</i> O157:H7	0	1	15	17
<i>Giardia</i>	7	10	60	98
Hepatitis A	1	1	7	7
Hepatitis B (acute & chronic)	13	88	82	67
Hepatitis C (acute & past/present)	54	213	313	784
Rabies (Animal)	0	1	28	60
<i>Salmonella</i>	57	34	377	273
<i>Shigella</i>	18	33	67	71

As of January 2008, OSDH is no longer reporting to counties for investigation Hepatitis C cases for individuals over the age of 40 years old. Discrepancies between state and county numbers may result from cases being reported directly to the county. Also, Tulsa County totals for Hepatitis B includes perinatal cases.

Surveillance Report

