



August 15, 2023

NOTICE OF POSSIBLE EXPOSURE TO CONTAGIOUS ILLNESS

Dear Salt River Elementary School Families,

An SRES Pre-K student has a confirmed case of chickenpox. The student was last on campus August 9, and we were just made aware of this diagnosis today. We want to inform you about this condition and the related exclusion and return-to-care practices at our facility. Without violating the confidentiality of this child, the facts you need to know about your child's possible exposure in this situation are below.

What is chickenpox? An illness with rash and fever caused by the varicella-zoster virus. Chickenpox is highly contagious to people who have not previously been vaccinated or had the disease. The most contagious period is while the rash is spreading; a child may also be contagious 1 to 2 days before the rash appears. An infected person no longer spreads the virus when all the vesicles have scabs or crusts and no new skin vesicles are forming. Although uncommon, a previously immunized person can have a mild form of chickenpox, which is contagious.

What are the signs or symptoms?

- Rash (i.e., small red spots and bumps developing into very small fluid-filled sacs on the skin [vesicles] over 3-4 days and then forming scabs or “crusts”).
- Discrete groupings (“crops”) of vesicles will come out over several days. Someone who has chickenpox for more than a day will have some red bumps, vesicles, and scabbed-over vesicles all at the same time.
- Rash may appear inside mouth, ears, genital areas, and scalp.
- The rash is usually quite itchy.
- Fever, runny nose, cough.

How is it spread?

- Contact with the skin vesicles of someone with an uncovered shingles rash.
- Airborne route: Inhalation of virus that becomes airborne after fluid escapes from inside the vesicles or breathing small particles containing virus floating in the air.
 - The particles come from the vesicles or a child's respiratory secretions as droplets after a cough or sneeze. These germ-containing particles dry out quickly in the air or fall onto surfaces.
 - After drying out and attaching to dust particles, they can become suspended in the air again. The particles travel along air currents and can infect people in the same or another room.
 - Even brief exposure or shared airflow poses a high risk of infection for people who have not had the disease before, have not been protected by the chickenpox vaccine, or have a problem with their immune system.

How do you control it?

- **Chickenpox is a vaccine-preventable infection.** Immunize according to the current recommendations—when a child is 12 to 15 months of age and with a second dose at 4 to 6 years of age.
- Vaccinate older children, teens, and adults who are susceptible (i.e., those who have not received 2 doses of vaccine or who have not had the natural infection—the occurrence of a natural infection will need to be determined by a health professional).
- Infected children and teachers/caregivers may not return to school until the entire rash is crusted over.
- Use good surface-sanitation technique and good hand hygiene technique at all the times.
- Ventilate room air with fresh outdoor air.
- Children with chickenpox who are mildly ill and able to come to a program that cares for ill children require a room with separate ventilation with exhaust to and air exchange with the outside.

This is a great reminder to consider vaccinating your child against diseases like chickenpox. Should your child present any of these symptoms, we recommend you consult your family healthcare provider. Any student presenting these signs and symptoms will be excluded from school. Students must have a note from a healthcare provider stating they are under treatment. Please provide a doctor's note of clearance to return to school.

If you have any questions, please contact SRES at 480-362-2400.

Respectfully,

Dr. Amanda Guerrero, Ed.D.
Principal, Salt River Elementary School

Information adapted from Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide. American Academy of Pediatrics.

