

Department of Health & Human Services

January 7, 2010

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

The Oakland County Health Division (OCHD) has noted more children are being diagnosed with chickenpox than is expected for this time of year in Oakland County. **Most of the children being diagnosed with chickenpox currently are children who have received a single dose of the varicella vaccine.** Although chickenpox is usually not a serious illness, it often causes children to miss days at school while they have a rash, and parents may miss work to stay at home with their ill child. In some children, chickenpox may cause more serious illness, leading to a stay in the hospital or in some very extreme cases, death.

The varicella vaccine can prevent chickenpox (caused by the varicella virus) and is safe and effective for children who are 12 months of age or older. The varicella vaccine series consists of two doses given at least 3 months apart (at least 4 weeks apart for persons 13 years of age or older). A single dose of the varicella vaccine does not provide adequate protection against chickenpox. A second dose is required for full protection.

If your child has not already had chickenpox nor received 2 shots of the varicella vaccine, we recommend that he/she receive the vaccine. The vaccine, if given 3- 5 days after exposure to chickenpox disease, can either help to prevent illness or reduce its severity. Your child's doctor or OCHD can assist in vaccinating children who are not protected against chickenpox.

As of January 1, 2010, Michigan law now requires all children entering kindergarten, entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade, or children in any grade changing school districts to have documentation of receiving 2 doses of varicella vaccine.

If you have any questions, please contact your child's doctor or OCHD at 800-848-5533.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Forzley, R.S., M.P.A.  
Manager/Health Officer



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Chief of Medical Services