

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD

Fairfield, Connecticut 06824

**Public Health Nursing Telephone
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September 6, 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The Varicella Zoster virus (VZV) causes chickenpox (varicella), a vaccine preventable generalized rash illness that is spread by coughing, sneezing or direct contact. VZV also causes shingles (herpes zoster), a localized rash in a person who has already had chickenpox, and is spread through direct contact with the shingles rash and through the air. This letter is to notify you that cases of chickenpox/shingles have been reported in our school and that your child may have been exposed. Cases of chickenpox may continue to occur in the school throughout the school year.

Chickenpox (also known as varicella) is usually a mild disease. However, chickenpox virus infection can sometimes have life-threatening complications, and it puts people who get it at future risk for shingles. Shingles, which results from reactivation of the chickenpox virus in persons who have had chickenpox, can be very painful and can also have life-threatening complications.

Chickenpox exposure used to be accepted as a rite of passage of childhood. Now that there is an effective chickenpox vaccine, we no longer have to accept the uncertain short and long-term risks of getting chickenpox. Current law for entry into school requires that children born on or after January 1, 1997, and those children who enter 7th grade on or after August 2000, be vaccinated with chickenpox vaccine or provide a written statement from their healthcare provider that they have had the disease. This written statement must be provided by your child's physician, Physician's Assistant, or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse.

The law requiring chickenpox vaccination reduces the number of children at risk. However, there still remains a segment of the population who are susceptible to disease from exposure to the chickenpox virus. If you think your child may still be susceptible to chickenpox, we and the Connecticut Department of Public Health encourage you to seek immediate counsel from your regular health care provider and to seriously consider getting vaccinated now. Children who get chickenpox disease may not attend school until the sixth day after the appearance of the rash.

Vaccination against chickenpox greatly reduces both the mild and serious risks of chickenpox and future shingles. Importantly, it also can stop the spread of the chickenpox virus to others, including adults who have not yet had it.

Additional information is available on the Mill Hill Website regarding questions you have about chickenpox and the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine.

For additional information, please call your health care provider.

Sincerely,

Mary McCarthy RN
School Nurse