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OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

St. Clair County Health Department

2024

SCCHD-02

ISSUE DATE: 03/07/24

TO: St. Clair County Providers, Hospital ICPs, Emergency Departments, Walk-In Clinics, Neurologists, ENT's, Pulmonology, OB/GYN, and Pediatricians

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VARICELLA INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS AND CLINICIANS:

St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) has seen a recent rise in Varicella (Chickenpox) cases. We are encouraging any healthcare providers to keep Varicella in their differential when evaluating individuals with symptoms concurrent with this disease.

Varicella is a vaccine preventable disease that is highly contagious. It can be serious, especially to infants, pregnant persons, and immunocompromised individuals.

The period of communicability for Varicella is 1-2 days before onset of rash until all lesions have crusted. The incubation period is 14-16 days with a range of 10-21 days.

Clinical Case Definition:

An illness with acute onset of diffuse (generalized) macular-papular-vesicular rash without other apparent cause. Varicella rash is itchy and the lesions progress from fluid-filled vesicles to dried crusts and scabs. Other flu-like symptoms may be noticed such as fevers or malaise.

Laboratory Confirmation:

Lab confirmation of identified cases is strongly recommended to confirm diagnosis. **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)** tests are the method of choice for rapid clinical diagnosis and confirmation. Specimens for varicella virus PCR include swabs of fluid from unroofed vesicles and /or crusts.

Recommendations:

- In accordance with Michigan Public Health Code, it is required to report all **suspect** cases **immediately** to SCCHD.
- Individuals diagnosed with Varicella should be excluded from any group activities until all lesions have crusted.
- Do not rule out diagnosis of Varicella based on immunization status. Although highly effective "breakthrough" cases are seen.
- Strongly recommend Varicella-containing vaccines as well as all other ACIP recommended vaccines.
- Individuals susceptible to Varicella should receive a vaccine as soon as possible, post-exposure vaccination with Varicella vaccine given within 3 days of exposure may prevent illness or modify severity of disease. Prophylactic use of the vaccine up to 5 days after exposure may also be effective.
- Have testing supplies readily available and be knowledgeable on specimen collection process.

Call SCCHD with questions or to report suspect/actual cases at (810) 987-5300. MDHHS Varicella Investigation guidelines: [MDHHS's Varicella Investigation Guidelines](#)