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ADDITIONAL VARICELLA CASES CONFIRMED IN COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL



Contact:

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Lake City - The Florida Department of Health in Columbia County (DOH-Columbia) has confirmed eight additional cases of varicella, the vaccine-preventable disease commonly called chickenpox, linked to a local school, bringing the total number of cases to 15. The department is pleased to have vaccinated 68 previously unvaccinated people in response to this outbreak to help stop the spread of chickenpox.

Per state statutes, the location of the school and identifying information about the students are not shared. Parents at the school in question have been notified in writing.

Chickenpox is highly contagious and can spread easily to others who have never had the virus or been vaccinated. Chickenpox can be spread when a sick person coughs or sneezes, sending droplets into the air and onto surfaces. It can also be spread by directly touching the blisters, saliva or mucus of a person who has the virus. It takes between 10-21 days after being near a person who has the virus for someone to develop chickenpox, and the illness usually lasts about 5-10 days. Symptoms include:

- Blister-like rash;
- Fever that lasts about four to six days;
- Itching; and
- Tiredness.

If you think you have had contact with someone with the virus and develop symptoms, contact your health care provider.

People who are sick with chickenpox should avoid contact as much as possible with anyone who has never had it. Those caring for the sick should wash hands frequently, before and after any contact with the person who is ill, or touching items they have used.

Some people are more likely to have very severe symptoms and may be at high risk for serious complications. This includes babies, pregnant women, people who have a weakened immune system because of illness or medications, and unvaccinated teens and adults who've never had the virus.

The best way to prevent chickenpox is by receiving two doses of the varicella vaccine. For vaccination information, call DOH-Columbia at (386) 758-1068, or visit the main clinic at 217 NE Franklin Street,

Lake City, FL 32055. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, no appointment is necessary. Please visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/immunization/index.html> to view immunization schedules for infants and school age children and teens.

DOH-Columbia continues to work with health care providers, schools and community partners in sharing the facts about chickenpox and recommends that parents fully vaccinate children at their health care provider's office or at a health department location.

About the Florida Department of Health

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