

June 13, 2014

Dear Parent/Guardian,

An individual who attends Bedford High School has been diagnosed with chickenpox. Chickenpox is a highly contagious illness that generally starts with a slight fever, followed by a blister-like, itchy rash. Although this is usually not a serious illness, children often miss days at school or daycare thereby causing parents to miss work as well. Also in some children and certain high-risk individuals, including those with HIV/AIDs, on chemotherapy, or pregnant, chickenpox can cause much more severe illness.

The varicella vaccine can prevent chickenpox and is safe and effective for children 12 months of age or older. This vaccine is recommended by both The American Academy of Pediatricians and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for all children who have never had the chickenpox and it is part of a child's routine vaccinations. The varicella vaccine series consists of **two** doses given at least 3 months apart for children 12 years and under and at least 4 weeks apart for those 13 years and older.

If your child has already been fully vaccinated against chickenpox, please make sure that you have provided a copy of their immunization records to Bedford High School so that this may be included in their health record. If there are any additional cases of chickenpox at the High School, children who have not received 2 doses of varicella vaccine will be excluded from school.

If your child has not already had chickenpox and has not been fully immunized, we recommend that they receive the vaccine. The vaccine, if given 3 – 5 days after exposure to chickenpox can prevent or reduce the severity of illness. Your child's doctor or the Monroe County Health Department can assist in vaccinating children who are not protected.

There are a few children with weakened immune systems who should not receive the vaccine, and your child's health care provider will be able to advise you what to do if your child has had exposure to chickenpox. A medicine is available (VZIG) that can protect children and adults with weakened immune systems and pregnant women from chickenpox.

If your child does develop chickenpox, they should be kept home until the rash has crusted over (usually about five days).

If you have any questions about chickenpox please contact your family's physician or the Monroe County Health Department, at 734-240-7832. You may also contact the District Health Nurses for the Bedford Public Schools at 734-850-6034.

Sincerely,

Roxann Satkowski ,RN, BSN – District Health Nurse

Karen Weis, RN, BSN – District Health Nurse