Varicella (Chickenpox)
Outbreak Surveillance for School Nurses

Quick Reference Guide for School Nurses

Managing an outbreak of varicella entails surveillance, case identification, outbreak confirmation and institution of preventive and control measures. An outbreak is defined as 5 or more cases in a congregate setting that are epidemiologically linked. All outbreaks, including varicella need to be reported to the local health department immediately.

Please complete monthly survey even if you have zero reports.

Outbreak Case Definition: 5 or more cases in a congregate setting that are epidemiologically linked.

If you identify an outbreak:

_____ Immediately notify your local health department and the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) at 800-423-1271 of the outbreak.

_____ Start a line list of cases. A blank line list can be found on the Varicella School Nurse Resource page: http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/IBD_VPD/VPD/Documents/Varicella_Outbreak_Line_List.pdf

_____ Implement Varicella control measures:

- Exclude or isolate cases from the school setting immediately and until all blisters are crusted over, generally 5 days after rash onset

- Confirm that it is an outbreak (with the assistance of the DIDE Outbreak Team)
  - Collect specimens for testing using polyester swab method outlined on DIDE website

- Send outbreak notification letter to parents

- Continue to identify cases and report to the outbreak team

- Continue to respond to the monthly varicella surveillance survey