



Department of Health & Wellness

PO Box 2000
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
C1A 7N8

Telephone: (902) 368-4996
Fax: (902) 620-3354
Internet: princeedwardisland.ca

To: Birchwood Intermediate School

From: Dr. Heather Morrison, Chief Public Health Officer

Date: January 29, 2019

Subject: Varicella (Chickenpox)

The Chief Public Health Officer has received notification of a student in grade 9 who attends Birchwood Intermediate School that has been diagnosed as having varicella (chickenpox). The student became symptomatic while on a school trip out of the province with the grade 9 class. Symptoms include a low grade temperature and a rash which usually looks like water blisters and which becomes itchy. Persons who have been previously immunized with the Varicella vaccine can still develop a mild form of chickenpox when exposed to someone who has an active case of chickenpox.

The majority of students in Grade 9 would have only received one dose of Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine. In the year 2000, Varicella vaccine (one dose) was introduced into the children's immunization schedule. In 2011, in accordance with the new national guidelines, a second dose of Varicella vaccine was introduced for children in PEI. A catch-up program for 4-6 year olds was conducted in 2012. However, the current grade 7, 8 and 9 students would not have been part of this group, therefore, a booster dose of vaccine is being offered to students at Birchwood to further reduce the chance of varicella infection.

Public Health Nursing will be reviewing the immunization records of all children in the affected classes to determine if they need to be immunized. Vaccine will be offered to those students who have no record of having received the vaccine, or have received only one dose. For those students who are recommended to receive the vaccine, they will be able to do so at school.

Please call your local Public Health Nursing office if you have any further questions.