

## DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE THE VARICELLA VACCINE?

With recent concerns about chickenpox at 2 Schools in Lake County and Osceola County, the Orange County Health Department would like to remind parents to make sure that their children have updated immunizations.

“Now is a great time to beat the back to school immunization rush and keep your children safe from vaccine preventable diseases like chickenpox,” said Dr. Kevin M. Sherin, Director of the Orange County Health Department.

In Florida, the Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine is a requirement for daycare and school entry. The minimum age to receive the vaccine is 12 months. Two doses are required; the second dose of Varicella vaccine is recommended routinely at age 4-6 years but may be administered earlier if desired.

Chickenpox was, until recently, one of the most common childhood diseases. Before Varicella vaccine, there were about 4 million cases of chickenpox a year in the United States. Chickenpox is caused by the Varicella Zoster Virus. The most recognizable feature for chickenpox is an itchy rash all over the body. It also causes fever and drowsiness. It is spread from person to person through the air, by coughing, sneezing or breathing, and can be spread by contact with fluid from the blisters.

Chickenpox is usually mild, but it occasionally causes serious problems. The blisters can become infected, and some children can develop encephalitis. About 1 in 250,000 infants less than 1 year of age who contract the disease die. For older children who contract the disease, about 1 in 100,000 dies. Approximately 1 in 500 children who get chickenpox is hospitalized.

Orange County parents are urged to have their children vaccinated if they have never had the chickenpox disease, never received the Varicella vaccine or had only one dose of the vaccine. If children develop the illness after being vaccinated, they usually experience less severe symptoms than infected, unvaccinated children.

The Orange County Health Department is offering free immunizations, including the chickenpox vaccine, from 8am-12noon and 1pm-2pm Monday through Thursday and 8am-11am on Friday for children who do not have insurance, have insurance that does not cover immunizations, have Medicaid or children who are American Indian or Alaskan Native. We see patients on a walk in basis only.

For more information, please visit the Orange County Health Department website at [www.orchd.com](http://www.orchd.com) , call the immunization program at 407-836-2520, or visit your child’s pediatrician/physician.