



01 April 2019

Metro North
Hospital and Health Service

Dear Parents and Staff Members

Metro North Public Health Unit is aware of an ongoing outbreak of chickenpox (varicella) at Stuartholme School, Toowong.

In addition to previous correspondence, further advice is as follows:

- Chickenpox is caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, runny nose, cough, fatigue and an itchy rash. Chickenpox is contagious and is spread from person-to-person by way of coughing and through contact with nasal secretions and/ or the fluid inside the blisters. People can be infectious from 1-2 days before the rash appears and until all the blisters have formed scabs, usually around 5 days later.
- The incubation period (time from exposure to onset of illness) is usually between 14-16 days, but can up to 21 days. Given this time period, there could be further cases of chickenpox amongst the school community during and after the school holidays. To minimise ongoing transmission, all students should be up-to-date with their vaccinations.
- Receipt of two doses of varicella vaccine provides increased protection and minimises the chance of breakthrough varicella (chickenpox). The chickenpox (varicella) vaccine is offered to all children on the National Immunisation Program at 18 months as part of the measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV) vaccine. To minimise the risk of a breakthrough chicken pox infection the administration of a second dose of a varicella (chickenpox) containing vaccine is recommended, and this may be purchased through your GP.
- Everyone should be on high alert for onset of symptoms and stay away from school and other gatherings if feeling unwell. Anyone with chickenpox must be excluded from school for at least 5 days from the onset of their illness and until all blisters have dried up.
- **Staff or school community members who are pregnant (or suspect they may be pregnant), or have a weakened immune system, or whose newborn baby has had contact with chickenpox, are recommended to take this letter to their GP or obstetrician for advice.** Varicella zoster immunoglobulin (antibodies) may be considered for contacts at high risk of complications because of pregnancy or other medical conditions.

A Queensland Health fact sheet about varicella zoster virus (chickenpox) is enclosed for your information.

If you have any further queries, please seek medical advice or contact the Metro North Public Health Unit on (07) 3624 1111 during usual business hours.

Kind regards,

Dr Rosie Muller
Public Health Physician
Metro North Public Health Unit