



MEDIA RELEASE – OPINION-EDITORIAL

DATE: FEBRUARY 29, 2024

TIME: 4:00pm

St. Clair County Health Department – Opinion-Editorial Raising Awareness on Chickenpox

A recent rise in St. Clair County chickenpox (or “varicella”) cases brings back around that long-time hot topic of immunity and disease prevention. Chickenpox is a vaccine preventable disease that was quite common, yet most people are unaware there can be severe and life-threatening consequences. Chickenpox is a vaccine-preventable disease that spreads in the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. It can also be spread by touching or breathing in the virus particles that come from chickenpox blisters. Symptoms of Chickenpox are fever, headache, feeling tired and an itchy rash of blisters. Chickenpox in adolescence or adulthood tends to be more severe, and complications (secondary bacterial infection, pneumonia, central nervous system effects, and hospitalization) vary in direct proportion to age. Susceptible women entering child-bearing years are also at risk for congenital varicella syndrome.

Vaccine rates in our county have been historically lower than the majority of the state, leaving community members susceptible. Currently St. Clair County has 8.8% of school children with at least one vaccine waived. To be considered immune to chickenpox one must have two doses of vaccine or a case identified and documented by a medical provider. We encourage parents who have fallen behind in obtaining the second dose of varicella vaccine to make that appointment with their child’s provider or at the St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) to get caught up! Early identification of cases is also key in interrupting transmission and preventing outbreaks. If your child is susceptible to chickenpox seek diagnosis quickly to avoid exposures. Don’t forget the SCCHD now has medical staff based in [several school districts throughout the county](#) for easy access to vaccination and rapid diagnosis.

This is also a great opportunity to inspire those who were hesitant to re-consider vaccination, speak with a trusted health care professional about concerns, and be aware of the disease risk. SCCHD staff are community members and parents, they understand how difficult vaccine decisions can be, and welcome questions as well as conversation around vaccines.

We are ALL Public Health!

Liz King, RN, BSN, Health Officer – Director
St. Clair County Health Department