



## Chickenpox Policy

Schools are the most common sites for chickenpox outbreaks. Studies have demonstrated that outbreaks in the school setting can persist for up to 6 months. This policy aims to reduce exposure among children at Repton Abu Dhabi.

### Repton School Staff, Students, Parents and Visitors

If you have chickenpox, stay off work and at home until you're no longer infectious, which is until the last blister has burst and crusted over. This usually takes five or six days after the rash begins.

If either you or your child has chickenpox, it is also a good idea for you, or them, to avoid contact with:

- pregnant women
- newborn babies
- anyone who has a weak immune system, such as people who are having chemotherapy (a treatment for cancer) or taking steroid tablets

If you or your child have recently been exposed to the chickenpox virus, you may not be able to visit friends or relatives in hospital.

### Children in School

Children within the school premises suspected to have Chickenpox must be brought to the School Clinic to be examined by the Nurse and make necessary recommendations.

Children with symptoms should be excluded from school until all lesions have scabbed over (usually about 5 days after rash onset). A doctor's diagnosis or laboratory testing is not necessary for exclusion. If chickenpox is suspected, the person should be excluded from the school setting.

The parents will be phoned and asked to take the child home or as advised by the School Nurse. Teacher, Head of Key Stage, Deputy Head Teacher and Headmaster will be notified.

Chickenpox is a reportable disease in Abu Dhabi. Therefore, all suspected cases should be reported to the School Nurse verbally, written or by email and a reporting process to the Health Authority Abu Dhabi will be done by the School.

### *Outbreak Definition*

A chickenpox outbreak in a school setting is defined as:

- 5 or more cases within a 2-month period in the same school facility

An outbreak is considered over when no new cases occur within 2 months from the date the last case was considered infectious.



## **An Outbreak Response**

Once an outbreak is confirmed, parents should be notified of their child's possible exposure to chickenpox. A letter will be sent which includes education on the signs and symptoms of the disease and its prevention. Children and Staff with signs and symptoms should be sent home and encouraged to consult a medical professional.

Because chickenpox infection is particularly dangerous in adults and pregnant women, teachers and employees should also be notified of the outbreak and educated on the signs and symptoms of chickenpox. A fact sheet on chickenpox is available on the School's website and Nurse's Notice Board. The Health Authority Abu Dhabi should be contacted and notified once 5 cases are identified within the school.

## **Exclusions**

Exclusions of vaccine-exempt students should occur once at least 5 cases have occurred within a 2-month period among students in the same class or Year level. Exclusions should only be made to students within the same class or Year level. Vaccine-exempt students should remain out of school for days 10-21 after the last known case is considered non-infectious. Days 10-21 are the critical days for vaccine-exempt students to be out of school, however, local health authority may choose to exclude students for the full 21 days after exposure to simplify the exclusion policy. It is recommended that the school administration contact the local health authority if help is needed in determining who and when someone should be excluded.

Vaccination within 3 days, and possibly 5 days, of exposure has been shown to prevent or reduce the severity of disease. However, since an adequate immune response can take up to 2 weeks to develop, disease may still result even if vaccination occurs soon after exposure. Parents should still be cautioned to watch for signs of illness even if their child receives the vaccine within 5 days of exposure, and should keep the child home if they suspect their child is ill. If parents of vaccine-exempt students choose to vaccinate their children, the exclusionary period does not apply and students may return to school as soon as they are vaccinated.

The local health authority officer may evaluate individual cases and outbreaks to make any necessary adjustments to exemptions.

**For the 2018-2019 school year** at Repton Abu Dhabi, all Year 1 students are required to be vaccinated for chickenpox. Exclusions do not apply to students without a vaccination requirement, although any sick child, regardless of vaccination requirement, should be excluded until all lesions have scabbed.

## **Vaccination**

Because chickenpox infection can still result after one dose of the chickenpox vaccine, the Health Authority Abu Dhabi now recommends that all persons should routinely be given two doses of the chickenpox vaccine. A second dose catch-up chickenpox vaccination is recommended for children and adolescents who previously had received one dose. Although two doses of chickenpox vaccine are not currently required for school entry, it is strongly recommended that all persons receive two doses to provide better protection against the disease and to prevent future outbreaks in the school setting.



References:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/varicella/basic-school-daycare-req.htm>

<http://www.haad.ae/haad/tabid/58/Mid/417/ItemID/311/ctl/Details/Default.aspx>

<http://health.utah.gov/epi/diseases/Chickenpox/Chickenpox%20Policy%20for%20Schools.pdf>

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