

## Chickenpox Disease and Screening Questions

**Primary Infection (Chickenpox):** “In children, the rash is often the first sign of disease. The rash is generalized and pruritic (itching) and progresses rapidly from macules to papules to vesicular lesions before crusting. The rash typically appears first on the head, then on the trunk and then the extremities; the highest concentration of lesions is on the trunk. Lesions also occur on mucous membranes of the oropharynx, respiratory tract, vagina, conjunctiva, and the cornea. Lesions are usually 1 to 4 mm in diameters. The vesicles are superficial and delicate and contain clear fluid on an erythematous base. Vesicles may rupture or become purulent before they dry and crust. Successive crops appear over several days, with lesions present in several stages of development. Healthy children usually have 200 to 500 lesions in 2 to 4 successive crops and illness lasts, typically, 5 to 10 days. The clinical course is generally mild, with malaise, itching and a temperature up to 102 degrees F for 2 – 3 days. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/varicella.pdf> (p. 203)

**Breakthrough Disease:** “A case of wild-type varicella infection occurring more than 42 days after vaccination. Such disease is usually mild with a shorter duration of illness, fewer constitutional symptoms, and fewer than 50 skin lesions. Breakthrough cases with fewer than 50 lesions have been found to be one third as contagious as varicella in unvaccinated persons with 50 or more lesions, but breakthrough cases with 50 or more lesions can be just as contagious as cases in unvaccinated persons.” (VPD Surveillance Manual, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2011, Varicella, Chapter 17-1: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/surv-manual/chpt17-varicella.pdf> ). **If a school nurse or public health nurse does not feel that the report of disease is reliable, provide education and refer to clinic for vaccine. A lab test (titer) can be done to see if protective antibodies are present.**

### Screening Questions:

- a. **What were the symptoms your child experienced?** (typical signs and symptoms include rash, fever, cough, fussiness, headache, decreased appetite).
- b. **Describe the rash your child had.** (rash usually develops on the scalp and trunk of the body and then spreads to face arms and legs).
- c. **About how many lesions (pox) did your child have and describe the characteristics?** (typically 200 – 500 hundred pox form and they are itchy. They also appear in successive crops. Illness 5 – 10 days).
- d. **Did other children in the school, neighborhood, community have chickenpox disease?** (Chickenpox is very contagious. If the parent relates that their child was exposed to other kids with disease, this is helpful in screening for disease)