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Alaska elementary students need varicella vaccination by July 1

The state of Alaska is requiring all children through grade six to have the varicella vaccination by July 1. ASD students must present their updated immunization record during school registration in order to enroll in summer school or for the 2009-10 school year.

Varicella is commonly referred to as chickenpox, a childhood disease that is usually mild but can lead to severe skin infection, scars, pneumonia, brain damage and death. The varicella virus can be spread through the air or direct contact with chickenpox blisters.

Students in grades K-6 are required to have two doses of the varicella vaccination. Pre-school students must have at least one dose of the vaccination to enroll in school. Students who have had chickenpox must present a medical record that is medically verified, meaning that only signatures of a professional MD/DO/ANP or PA, along with a date, will be accepted as proof of the disease. Starting July 1, ASD can only accept the official state form from health care providers.

“Close to 17,000 ASD students currently need at least one dose of the varicella vaccination in order to meet the new requirement,” said Nancy Edtl, director of Nursing and Health Services. “We are urging parents to get their children vaccinated early to beat the rush and make sure their children’s information is up to date at their school.”

For more information on immunizations, parents may talk to their family doctor, school nurse or call the Alaska Immunization Program helpline at 269-8000.

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