

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTERS  
STUDENT/EMPLOYEE HEALTH**

Date approved – 5/97

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**SUBJECT:** Varicella Zoster (chickenpox) Control Plan  
*Varicella is a highly contagious disease characterized by fever and disseminated vesicular eruption. It may be transmitted by the respiratory route (up to three days prior to the onset of the rash) or from the vesicle fluid either by direct contact or aerosolization. The incubation period for varicella normally ranges from 10 - 21 days after exposure. Although it is generally a benign self-limiting disease, varicella may be associated with serious complications (e.g. pneumonia, encephalitis, bacterial superinfection, shock, and death). The infectivity of persons with varicella begins 48 - 72 hours prior to the appearance of the rash and ends when all lesions are crusted.*

**POLICY:** It is the policy of UNTHSC that the following procedures be followed for the management of varicella zoster exposures and infections.

- ❶ Varicella screening and vaccination
- ❷ Exposures
- ❸ Infections
- ❹ Management of infected patients

**PURPOSE:** To prevent the spread of varicella infections to susceptible patients, visitors, employees and students.

**PROCEDURES:**

**❶ VARICELLA SCREENING AND VACCINATION**

1. Employees who are at risk for occupational exposure to varicella will be screened at the time of employment for a history of varicella. Those who have a negative or unknown history will be offered the varicella vaccine at no cost.
2. Students will be required to present evidence of varicella disease or vaccination upon entry into their first year at UNTHSC. If neither can be documented the vaccine will be given by student/employee health services. The student will be responsible for the cost of the vaccine.
3. Students and employees who wish to receive the vaccine will report to Student/Employee Health for the vaccination. The vaccination consists of two injections: 0.5ml subcutaneously followed by a second dose of 0.5ml approximately four (4) to eight (8) weeks after the first injection.
4. Those who receive the vaccine will report any occurrence of varicella-type rash at the

injection site or a generalized varicella-type rash for one month following each of the two vaccinations. If any rash is noted they will notify the Student/Employee Health department immediately and will have no contact with patients or other students or employees until all lesions are dried and crusted.

5. If employees choose to take the vaccine at a later date it will be provided at no cost. Students will be responsible for the cost of the vaccine
6. Susceptible employees and students who decline the vaccine will follow the policy for post exposure management (section ②) should exposure occur.

## ② EXPOSURE

1. A susceptible (no history of chickenpox or vaccination) student/employee will be considered exposed if they are in the same room with a contagious varicella case without wearing a mask, or have direct contact with lesions or respiratory secretions without wearing gloves.
2. An exposed susceptible students and employees must report the exposure to their supervisor as soon as possible after it occurs, whether it occurs at work or outside of the workplace.
3. Administration of VZIG (varicella zoster immune globulin) will be recommended as soon as possible and within 96 hours of exposure for varicella-susceptible pregnant women or immunocompromised individuals. VZIG will be recommended for healthy susceptible adults after exposure only after careful consideration of the individual's health status, type of exposure, and likelihood of previous infection with varicella.
4. Administration of the vaccine will be started within 72-120 hours after exposure if evaluation of the exposed individual's immunity to varicella indicates susceptibility.
4. During the incubation period (day 10 –21, 10-28 if VZIG given) the exposed person will be screened each day prior to assuming duties. The screening may be done by a designated qualified person in the department where the exposed person is assigned, or by Student/Employee Health.  
Screening documentation will include: 1) temperature and 2) absence of signs and symptoms of infection. As long as no disease symptoms occur, the student/employee may be allowed to work. The exposed person will be responsible for ensuring that screening is done.
5. If infection does occur, the student or employee must remain away from school/work until all lesions are dried and crusted.

## ③ INFECTION

1. Students/employees who have a varicella infection will be **work/school restricted** until all the lesions are dried and crusted.

## ④ MANAGEMENT OF INFECTED PATIENTS

Refer to policy 96.001.7 *Triage of Patients with Communicable Diseases* in the Infection Control Manual or [intranet.hsc.unt.edu/policies/qualityassurance/TriageofPatientsCommunicableDiseases.pdf](http://intranet.hsc.unt.edu/policies/qualityassurance/TriageofPatientsCommunicableDiseases.pdf) and [intranet.hsc.unt.edu/policies/qualityassurance/Disease.pdf](http://intranet.hsc.unt.edu/policies/qualityassurance/Disease.pdf)

## **DOCUMENTATION:**

Vaccination records will be maintained by Student/Employee Health. Exposure/infection records will be maintained by the respective department/Student/Employee Health.

## **RESPONSIBILITY:**

All departments/Student Health/Employee Health/Infection Control Committee

## **REFERENCES:**

APIC. DFW Chapter, 1997.

CDC (1997). Guideline for Infection Control in Health Care Personnel. Federal Register, September, 1997.

Merck Pharmaceuticals, Vaccine Division.

[www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/surv\\_manual/varicella.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/surv_manual/varicella.pdf)