NEWS RELEASE

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Encouraging Chicken Pox Protection

Why is it important for children to receive a varicella vaccine before they are two years of age and a booster before entering school? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, serious complications can include: skin infections, infection of the lungs (pneumonia), inflammation of blood vessels, swelling of the brain and/or spinal cord coverings (encephalitis or meningitis), and blood stream, bone, or joint infections. Some people get so sick that they need to be hospitalized. Before varicella vaccine, almost everyone in the United States got chickenpox, an average of 4 million people each year. Prior to U.S. vaccination began in 1996, chickenpox caused more than 100 deaths every year.

Children who get chickenpox usually miss at least 5 or 6 days of school or childcare due to their contagious period. Some people who get chickenpox get a painful rash called shingles (also known as herpes zoster) years later. Chickenpox can spread easily from an infected person to anyone who has not had chickenpox and has not received the chickenpox vaccine.

There are several ways to cover the cost of chickenpox shots.   Most private health insurance plans cover it as part of preventative care with no out of pocket cost to the parent if the shot is given during a regular check-up. Medicaid (Badgercare in Wisconsin) covers all preventive vaccines for children under 19 years of age and can be administered at your provider or through the local health department. For more information, go to the Florence County Health Department webpage at http://www.florencecountywi.com/ . The health department is located on the second floor, 501 Lake Avenue in the Florence County Courthouse, open Monday through Friday from 8:30a.m. - 4:00 p.m. closed for lunch from 12-12:30. Need health insurance? Visit access.wi.gov to see if you qualify for benefits.

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