

VARICELLA (Chickenpox Only)

DEFINITIONS

Clinical case definition:

An illness with acute onset of diffuse (generalized) maculo-papulovesicular rash without other apparent cause.

Outbreak definition:

5 or more cases of varicella in a particular setting that are epidemiologically linked.

LABORATORY CRITERIA FOR DIAGNOSIS

- Isolation of varicella virus from a clinical specimen, or
- Direct fluorescent antibody (DFA), or
- Polymerase chain reaction (PCR), or
- Positive serologic test for varicella-zoster capture immunoglobulin M (IgM), OR
- Significant rise in serum varicella immunoglobulin G (IgG) antibody level by any standard serologic assay. A significant rise is defined as a fourfold or greater rise in antibody titer between acute and convalescent serum specimens.

CASE CLASSIFICATION

- **CONFIRMED:** A case that is laboratory-confirmed or that meets the clinical case definition and is epidemiologically linked to a confirmed or probable case.
- **PROBABLE:** A case that meets the clinical case definition, is not laboratory confirmed, and is not epidemiologically linked to another probable or confirmed case. NOTE: Two probable cases that are epidemiologically linked would both be considered confirmed, even in the absence of laboratory confirmation.

RASH SEVERITY CLASSIFICATION:

- **<50 lesions:** easily counted in 30 seconds
- **50-249 lesions:** patient's hand can be placed on body without touching a lesion
- **250-499 lesions:** patient's hand cannot be placed on body without touching one or more lesions
- **500+ lesions:** cannot observe normal skin

NOTES:

Laboratory confirmation of cases of varicella is not routinely recommended; laboratory confirmation is recommended for fatal cases and in other special circumstances.

In vaccinated persons who develop varicella more than 42 days after vaccination (breakthrough disease), the disease is almost always mild with fewer than 50 skin lesions and shorter duration of illness. The rash may also be atypical in appearance (maculopapular with few or no vesicles).