

Chicken pox has been reported to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD).

“Chicken pox (varicella-zoster) is a virus best known for making its victims itch like crazy from the rash of blisters it causes,” said Tami Herskowitz, SWNPHD surveillance nurse.

“Once it gets going, chicken pox is extremely contagious and can catch up with anyone who’s not received the vaccine,” she said.

Before the vaccine was available, about 100 people in the U.S. died each year from chicken pox according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. People can make themselves nearly invincible against chicken pox if they get the vaccine.

Chicken pox is an “air and surface” attacker. The cough or sneeze of an infected person sends droplets into the air and onto surfaces. Others then take in the virus through their mouth or nose. Scratching the itchy lesions may also send the virus into the air and infect people.

“We encourage everyone to make sure their children receive the chickenpox vaccine,” explains Herskowitz. “Once someone has chicken pox, years later they can have a very painful disease later called shingles.”

Shots are available at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department in McCook.