

## Necrotizing fasciitis – A possible fatal varicella complication

A three-year-old boy presents on the fourth day of a varicella infection. He is febrile (temperature 39°C), toxic and unable to walk because of excruciating pain in his left thigh. Necrotizing fasciitis is confirmed. The boy dies

despite aggressive medicosurgical management. The parents are inconsolable and bewildered as to why their child died of chickenpox, an infection that they thought was mild.

### LEARNING POINTS

- Healthy children affected by varicella have a 40- to 60-fold increased risk of developing a severe invasive group A  $\beta$ -hemolytic streptococcal infection, including necrotizing fasciitis.
- The rate of death from varicella among children younger than 14 years of age is estimated to be 2/100,000 cases.
- The risk of death from necrotizing fasciitis is 10%.
- Varicella is a vaccine-preventable disease.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends primary vaccination of any person 12 months of age or older who is susceptible to varicella; however, only two provinces and one territory have added the vaccine to their immunization schedules.

*The Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program (CPSP) is a joint project of the Canadian Paediatric Society and Health Canada's Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control that undertakes the surveillance of rare diseases and conditions in children. For more information visit <[www.cps.ca/english/cpsp](http://www.cps.ca/english/cpsp)> or <[www.cps.ca/francais/pcsp](http://www.cps.ca/francais/pcsp)>.*