



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

CHICKENPOX FACT SHEET

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very contagious viral illness. It is most common in winter and early spring. Anyone who has never had it, or been vaccinated is susceptible but once a person has had chickenpox, they normally do not get it again. However, this virus remains dormant in a person's body and may reactivate years later as Shingles.

What are the symptoms?

- A rash that will turn into itchy red bumps that will then turn into blisters. Typically starting on head and chest and moving out to limbs.
- Sudden fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite

Symptoms develop 10-21 days after exposure (13-17 average) Typically lasts 5-7 days.

How can it be prevented?

- The chicken pox vaccine is very effective at preventing becoming sick with chickenpox and is the best line of defense.
- Children and adults should both get two doses of the vaccine. If vaccinated person becomes ill it is very mild.
- Prevent the spread by staying home until last lesion is dry.
- Use proper handwashing techniques.
- Cough or sneeze into tissue or sleeve.

How can it be spread?

- Person to person contact.
- Through the air after sneezing or coughing.
- Items soiled by discharges from blisters, nose or mouth.
- Person is infectious beginning 1-2 days before the rash.
- If a vaccinated person gets the illness it can still be spread.

How it is treated?

- Children usually miss 5-7 days from school.
- Calamine lotion and colloidal oatmeal baths may help relieve some itching.
- **NON ASPIRIN** medications (acetaminophen) to reduce fever.
- **OVER USE OF ASPIRIN IN CHILDREN IS LINKED TO REYES SYNDROME**

See Doctor Immediately

IF THE PERSON IS

- Under the age of 1, older than 12, weakened immune system or pregnant.

IF THE PERSON DEVELOPS

- Fever lasts longer than 4 days or is above 102°F; rash becomes red, warm or tender or leaks pus; difficulty walking, confusion, severe vomiting, severe cough or abdominal pain, or rash with bleeding or bruising