

CHICKENPOX FACT SHEET

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very contagious viral illness. Anyone who has never had chickenpox, or has never been vaccinated, can get it. Once a person has had chickenpox, they normally do not get it again. Chickenpox remains dormant in a person's body after infection, and it may reactivate years later as shingles.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- A rash that will turn into itchy red bumps and then blisters. It typically starts on the head and chest and then moves out to the limbs.
- Sudden fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite

Symptoms develop 10-21 days after exposure (13-17 average) and typically last 4-7 days.

How can it be prevented?

- The chickenpox vaccine is very effective at preventing individuals from becoming sick with chickenpox and is the best line of defense.
- Children and adults should both get two doses of the vaccine. If a vaccinated person becomes ill, it is usually very mild.
- Stay home until the last blister is dry.
- Use proper handwashing techniques.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or sleeve.

How is it spread?

- By person to person contact
- By breathing in droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person
- By touching items soiled by fluid from blisters, nose, or mouth

A person is contagious 1-2 days before the rash and until all the bumps have become scabbed.

If a vaccinated person gets the illness, they can still spread it.

How is it treated?

- Calamine lotion and colloidal oatmeal baths may help relieve some itching.
- **NON ASPIRIN** medications (acetaminophen) to reduce fever.
- **ASPIRIN SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO CHILDREN unless specifically directed by their health care provider.**
- Children usually miss 5-7 days of school.

See Doctor Immediately

IF THE PERSON IS:

- Under the age of 1, older than 12, has a weakened immune system, or is pregnant

IF SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

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

More information: <http://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

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