

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 has never been vaccinated, is susceptible. Once a person has had chickenpox, however, they normally do not get it again. 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 the head and chest and then moving out to the limbs.
- Sudden fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite

Symptoms develop 10-21 days after exposure (13-17 average) and typically last 5-7 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 very mild.
- Prevent the spread by staying home until last lesion is dry.
- Use proper handwashing techniques.
- Cough or sneeze into tissue or sleeve.

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

How can it be spread?

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

How is it treated?

- Calamine lotion and colloidal oatmeal baths may help relieve some itching.
- **NON ASPIRIN** medications (acetaminophen) to reduce fever.
- **OVERUSE OF ASPIRIN IN CHILDREN IS LINKED TO REYE'S SYNDROME**
- 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 THE PERSON DEVELOPS

- Fever lasting 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.

