



Chickenpox (Varicella)

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a disease caused by the varicella zoster virus. It causes a rash and fever and can be serious, especially for babies, adolescents, adults, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems. Chickenpox normally lasts for 5 to 10 days.

What are the symptoms of Chickenpox?

Symptoms of chickenpox include a rash of itchy blisters, fever, headache and tiredness. A person can have up to 500 blisters. They start on the face, chest, back, stomach and can spread across the whole body.

How does Chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox spreads through the air from coughing and sneezing. Chickenpox can also be spread by touching the fluid of a blister.

Is there a vaccine for Chickenpox?

Yes, there is a vaccine for chickenpox. The vaccine is made from a weak form of the virus. It protects the body by getting it ready to fight the virus. A person can still get the chickenpox if they have been vaccinated but it will be a very mild case.

The chickenpox vaccine is given in two doses. The first dose should be given to children aged 12 to 15 months and the second dose should be given at 4 to 6 years of age. Older children and adults can also get the vaccine when recommended by a doctor.

The chickenpox vaccine can be given in a combined vaccine with the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine. The combined vaccine is called a MMRV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend that children under 4 years old get the combined vaccine.

Why not let children get Chickenpox naturally?

Chickenpox can be mild but it can also be very serious. There is no way to predict who will have a mild case and who will become very sick.

How is Chickenpox treated?

Chickenpox can be treated with calamine lotions and colloidal oatmeal baths. The fever from chickenpox should be treated with non-aspirin medicines such as acetaminophen. Aspirin or products that contain aspirin should not be used to treat chickenpox as the use of aspirin with chickenpox can lead to a disease of the liver and brain.

You should contact your doctor if a person has chickenpox and:

Develops:

- Fever that lasts longer than four days
- Fever above 102° F
- If part of the rash or body becomes red, warm, tender or leaks pus (thick, discolored fluid)
- Difficult waking up or confusion
- Difficulty walking
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe cough

Or if the person is:

- Is older than 12 years of age
- Has a weakened immune system
- Is pregnant

For more information:

Contact Huron County Public Health at (419) 668-1652.

More information from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be found at www.cdc.gov/chickenpox

