



## **Chickenpox/ Varicella Information**

### **What is chickenpox?**

Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus, a member of the herpes virus family. In temperate climates, chickenpox occurs most frequently in winter and early spring.

### **Who gets chickenpox?**

Chickenpox is common in the United States; however, cases of chickenpox are expected to decrease as more individuals are immunized with the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine.

### **How is chickenpox spread?**

Chickenpox is transmitted to others when an infected person coughs or sneezes and sends the virus into the air. A susceptible person then inhales the virus into his or her mouth and nose and then becomes infected by the virus. Chickenpox may also be spread to a susceptible person if the susceptible person comes in contact with the infected person's skin lesions (rash) or comes in contact with clothing or linens that have been soiled with discharges from the infected person's skin lesions or respiratory tract (nose, mouth, lungs). When the rash of chickenpox scabs over, the scabs are not considered infectious.

### **What are the symptoms of chickenpox?**

The main symptom of chickenpox is an itchy, blister-like rash that occurs more on the face, scalp, and trunk than on other areas of the body. The blisters eventually dry, crust over, and form scabs. Adults sometimes get one to two days of fever and tiredness before developing the rash. Children usually have the rash occur at the same time as the fever and tiredness. The disease is usually more serious in adults than in children. Mild or inapparent infections occasionally occur in children.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms commonly appear 14 to 16 days (range of 10 to 21 days) after exposure to someone with chickenpox or herpes zoster (shingles).

### **When and for how long is a person able to spread chickenpox?**

A person is most able to transmit chickenpox from one to two days before the onset of rash until all lesions have crusted. People who are immunocompromised may be contagious for a longer period of time.

### **Does past infection with chickenpox make a person immune?**

Chickenpox infection generally results in lifelong immunity.

If you would like further information it can be found at the website below or please feel free to contact the nurse at your child's school.

<https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/about/index.html>

