



# Chicken Pox (Varicella virus)

## What is it?

- Chicken pox is a common, preventable infection caused by the varicella zoster virus. Chicken pox is often characterized by its contagious, itchy rash.
- The infection is usually mild in children. But newborn babies and adults can become very sick if they get chickenpox.
- Chicken pox is most common in the late winter and early spring.

## Signs and symptoms?

- Begins with a mild fever followed by small, fluid filled spots that show up all over the body.
- Spots commonly occur in successive crops and crust over in four to five days.
- Some people have only a few blisters. Other people can have hundreds.
- The chickenpox rash is very itchy.

## How is it spread?

- Chickenpox spreads easily. It jumps from person to person in two ways:
  - Through direct contact with the virus, when someone touches the blisters.
  - Through saliva droplets in the air, when someone with chickenpox sneezes, coughs, or even talks.
- The virus spreads most easily one or two days before the rash appears.
- A child with chickenpox can give the infection to other people until the blisters have dried up.

## Long term

- The virus that causes chicken pox remains in our bodies without causing any problems



- When we get older or when our immune system becomes weakened, the virus can reappear and cause shingles.
- Shingles are very painful.

## How to decrease the spread?

- There is a vaccine to prevent chicken pox. To find out more about this vaccination, contact your Health Care Provider or Public Health
- Take good care of the skin and make sure your child does not scratch it.
- A child who scratches a lot may get infections caused by bacteria that get into the skin.

## Pregnant women

- Pregnant women can develop severe chicken pox and pass it on to her unborn baby or new born after birth
- Mothers with chickenpox can also give it to their newborn babies after birth
- Consult your doctor as soon as possible if you are thinking of getting pregnant and have not had chickenpox.
- Separate bullet point: If you are exposed to chicken pox, call your doctor right away. A blood test can determine if you have the antibodies to protect you from the virus

## Recommended Absence:

- Students and staff with mild illness may return to school and/or daycare as soon as they are well enough to participate in normal activities, regardless of the state of the rash.

Chicken pox **must** be reported to the Medical Officer of Health as required by the Health Promotion and Protection Act.

## Resources:

[www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)

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