

Chickenpox

FACTSHEET

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What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox, also called Varicella Zoster, is a highly contagious viral disease that results in a blister-like rash, itching, tiredness and fever.

Who gets Chickenpox?

Anyone can get Chickenpox. Most people have had Chickenpox by young adulthood, but it can occur in anyone who has not been previously vaccinated or had the disease. The illness is usually more severe in infants, the immuno-suppressed and adults. Chickenpox occurs most frequently in the winter and early spring.

What are the symptoms of Chickenpox?

The first symptoms of Chickenpox include a sudden onset of a slight fever and feeling tired and weak. Upper respiratory symptoms, such as a runny nose, may be present. These symptoms are followed by the appearance of an itchy blister-like rash, usually on the trunk of the body. The blister-like rash appears in “crops” and there can be several stages of the rash present at the same time. The blister-like rash occurs more frequently on areas of the body that are usually covered with clothing. However, they can appear on the scalp, in the mouth and throat, and on the area around the eye. The blisters become dry and a scab is formed.

How is Chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox is highly infectious and spreads from person-to-person by direct contact with the blisters, saliva or through the air when an infected person’s coughing or sneezing.

How soon do symptoms appear?

It takes from 10-21 days after contact with an infected person for someone to develop chickenpox.

Is a person with Chickenpox contagious?

A person with chickenpox is contagious from several days before the rash develops until all blisters have formed scabs. If you visit a physician’s office or a hospital emergency room notify them immediately upon your arrival that you believe you have chickenpox. They will move you to an area that will not put others at risk for developing the disease.

Should a person with Chickenpox be excluded from work or school?

A person with chickenpox should remain at home until all blisters are scabbed over.

Can you get Chickenpox more than once?

It is uncommon to have chickenpox more than once. For most people, one infection is thought to provide lifelong protection against further disease.

Can Chickenpox be prevented?

Chickenpox can now be prevented by vaccination. This is a safe and effective vaccine. All children between the ages of 12-18 months should receive the vaccine.

Want more information?

Information about Chickenpox and other related health care topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call (202) 442-9371.

