

Chickenpox



Q: What is chickenpox?

A: Chickenpox is a highly infectious disease caused by the Varicella virus. It is a common childhood illness, characterised by small, red, itchy blisters on the face and body.

Q: How is it spread?

A: It spreads from person to person by direct contact or by droplets from an infected person when he sneezes or coughs. It can also spread indirectly through articles freshly soiled by droplets or fluid from the blisters of an infected person. The scabs themselves are not considered infectious.

Q: How long are the contagious periods?

A: The incubation period ranges from 10 to 21 days. During this time the infected person may feel and look well. However an infected person can spread chickenpox to other people during the incubation period. You may experience a fever 1-2 days before the spots appear.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: An infected person usually has a fever, body aches, headaches and a rash on the face, body, arms, legs and scalp. The spots appear over a few days and progress from being red spots to blisters which eventually burst, dry up and form crusts before healing. These spots are usually itchy and may leave scars when scratched.

Q: How is chickenpox treated?

A: In healthy children, chickenpox is usually a mild disease. Treatment is directed at reducing the itching and discomfort.

Q: What are the complications associated with chickenpox?

A: While chickenpox is common and harmless to most people, it may have an adverse impact on those whose immune systems are impaired.

Q: Can chickenpox be prevented?

A: Yes, chickenpox can be prevented through vaccination. Children below the age of 13 years receive 1 dose of the chickenpox vaccine. Children who are 13 years and above need 2 doses, 4-8 weeks apart. The chickenpox vaccine is safe and effective in protecting those who have never had chickenpox. However the vaccine is not 100% effective and you can still contract chickenpox but it may be a milder form.