

Chickenpox

Varicella Disease

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a disease caused by the varicella zoster virus. It causes a blister-like rash and fever.

How is Chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox is highly contagious. It can be spread through the air from coughing and sneezing, or by direct contact with the fluid from a chickenpox blister. Someone with chickenpox is contagious 1-2 days before the rash appears, and continues to be contagious until all lesions are scabbed over. A non-immune person will develop chickenpox if exposed to the virus.

What are the symptoms of Chickenpox?

Symptoms of chickenpox include a skin rash of itchy, blister-like lesions covering the body, but usually more concentrated on the face, scalp and trunk. As the rash spreads, the lesions will appear in different stages of development. Most people infected with chickenpox will also have fever, which develops just before or at the same time the rash appears. A person who has been vaccinated against chickenpox, but is exposed to the virus, may develop a less-severe rash and mild or no fever. Adolescents and adults, who are not immune, are more at risk for severe disease. Pregnant women who become infected may pass the disease to the fetus.

How is Chickenpox prevented?

There is a varicella vaccine that is available for anyone over the age of 12 months. It is safe and effective in preventing chickenpox. Currently, 2 doses of the vaccine are recommended. In Texas, the varicella vaccine is required for school and daycare attendance.

School Exclusion Policy:

Children with suspected or confirmed chickenpox should be kept out of school until the lesions are dry (scabbed), or if lesions are not blister-like, until 24 hours have passed with no new lesions.

Resources:

Center for Disease Control & Prevention- <http://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/index.html>

Texas Department of State Health Services-
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/chickenpox/>