



**Health Fact Sheet: Chicken pox**

**What is chicken pox?**

Varicella-zoster is the virus that causes chickenpox, is very contagious. It usually attacks just once in a lifetime and most often sets its sights on kids.

**How do you catch chickenpox?**

The viral infection is transferred from one person to another through direct contact with the broken chickenpox blisters and through airborne droplets.

The infectious period lasts from about three days before the rash appears until all the blisters have formed scabs.

This usually is between 10 to 20 days.

**What are the symptoms of chickenpox?**

- A rash that usually begins on the body and face and later often spreads to the scalp and limbs.
- It may also spread to the mucous membranes, especially in the mouth and on the genitals.
- The rash is typically very itchy.
- It begins as small red spots, which develop into blisters in a couple of hours.
- After one or two days, the blisters turn into scabs.
- New blisters may appear after three to six days.
- The number of blisters differs greatly from one person to another.
- The infected person may run a temperature.
- These symptoms tend to be mild in young children.
- Chickenpox lasts 7 to 10 days in children and longer in adults.
- Adults can feel very ill and take longer to recover. They are also more likely than children to suffer complications.

**How is chickenpox treated?**

- The treatment mostly consists of easing the symptoms.
- Remember that an infected person will be contagious until new blisters have stopped appearing and until all the blisters have scabs. They should stay at home while they are infectious.
- Avoid scratching the blisters because of the risk of infection.
- Cut the nails short or make the patient wear gloves.
- Pay attention to personal hygiene.
- If your child is in pain or has a fever you can give them a mild painkiller, such as paracetamol (eg Panadol) or ibuprofen (eg Nurofen for children). Follow the dosage instructions provided in the leaflet.



- Calamine lotion can help to relieve the itching.
- Keep the patient in cold surroundings because heat and sweat may make the itching worse.
- In attacks of chickenpox where the itching is so serious that the child's sleep is totally disturbed, antihistamine medicines with a heavily sedative effect can be used. Antihistamines are medicines for allergic reactions, motion sickness or insomnia.
- In serious cases of chickenpox in people with a weak immune system, aciclovir (eg Zovirax tablets/suspension), which works specifically against chickenpox, can be used.

### **What to do to prevent spreading?**

To prevent spreading the infection, keep children off school. Chickenpox is infectious from one to two days before the rash starts, until all the blisters have crusted over (usually five to six days after the start of the rash).

If your child has chickenpox, try to keep them away from public areas to avoid contact with people who may not have had it, especially people who are at risk of serious problems, such as newborn babies, pregnant women and anyone with a weakened immune system (for example, people having cancer treatment or taking steroid tablets).

### **Who Should Get Vaccinated With the Chickenpox Vaccine?**

The chickenpox vaccine is recommended for all children under age 13 who have not had chickenpox. It is also recommended for all adolescents and adults who have not been vaccinated and have not had chickenpox.

If you have had chickenpox, there is no need for you to get the vaccine

### **Note: According to DHA**

**Chickenpox cases: Exclusion from school until vesicles become dry, or 10 days from appearance of rash.**