

Infection Prevention and Control

Chickenpox

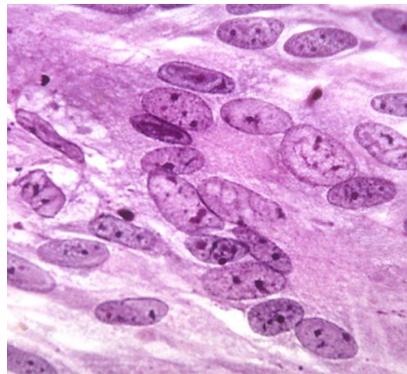


Photo Courtesy of CDC

Patient Information Leaflet

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is an infectious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It is most commonly seen in children under 10 years old as a mild illness.

Are some people more at risk than others?

Certain groups of people may experience more serious complications, such as:

- Infants within first four weeks of life
- Adults and pregnant women who have never had chickenpox
- People who have poor immune systems due to illness or treatments such as chemotherapy or high-dose steroids.

How will I know I have got chickenpox?

Chickenpox may begin with cold-like symptoms followed by a high temperature and an intensely itchy, fluid-filled, blister-like rash. Clusters of these fluid filled spots appear over 3 to 5 days, mostly over the body, face and occasionally over the limbs.

How did I get chickenpox?

At some point you or your child came into contact with someone who has chickenpox but had not developed the rash. Chickenpox is highly infectious, infecting up to 90% of people who come into contact with the disease.

Transmission is through direct person to person contact, airborne droplet infection or through contact with infected articles such as clothing and bedding. The incubation period

(time from becoming infected to when symptoms first appear) is from 10 to 21 days.

What will happen to me?

Clusters of fluid filled spots will appear over 3 to 5 days which are intensely itchy, mostly over the body and occasionally over the limbs. You will continue to be infectious until all the spots have crusted over (commonly about 5 to 6 days after onset of the rash).

Is it treatable?

There is no specific treatment for chickenpox. It is a viral infection that will therefore not respond to antibiotics. Treatment should be based on reducing symptoms such as fever and itchiness.

Can it affect my visitors?

Healthy people who have had chickenpox before will be immune. Anyone who has not had the infection before should avoid visiting you until all the fluid filled spots have crusted over.

How can I stop chickenpox spreading?

Chickenpox is highly infectious, but is a mild illness in childhood giving life long immunity. To prevent the spread of the infection, avoid contact with people who have not had chickenpox before.

Should you have any further questions or require further advice please speak to your doctor, nurse or Infection Prevention staff.

Infection Prevention Team 01535 294848

Write any questions/queries below

The Public Health England website and will give further guidance and information: <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on: 01535 294019 for advice.

Please raise any issue you may have about your care and treatment with a member of staff. Raising your concerns will not adversely affect the care you will receive.