

Chickenpox (Varicella-Zoster Virus)

What is chickenpox?

A highly infectious disease, also known as varicella, caused by the varicella zoster virus.

What are the symptoms?

- Rash (itchy blisters)
- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Loss of appetite

The rash usually develops on the chest and stomach and then spreads to the face, arms, and legs.

The symptoms usually begin 14-16 days after exposure but can range from 10-21 days. The illness lasts about 5-10 days.

How is chickenpox spread?

- It is spread from person to person when infected people cough or sneeze releasing droplets from their nose or mouth.
- It can also be spread through direct contact with the fluid from a blister of an infected person. A person is contagious for 1 – 2 days before the rash appears and continues to be contagious until all the blisters are crusted over (usually 6-8 days).

What should I do if I have symptoms?

- Contact your healthcare provider.
- Always call your health care provider's office before visiting.

How is chickenpox diagnosed?

Usually, by disease history and appearance.

How is chickenpox treated?

Most cases are treated with bed rest, fluids, and control of fever.

How can I prevent the spread of chickenpox?

The recommendations for chickenpox vaccination are as follows:

- All children younger than age 13 years should receive 2 doses of chickenpox vaccine (one dose at 12–15 months and a second dose at age 4–6 years).
- Everyone age 13 years and older who has never had the disease should receive two doses, given 4–8 weeks apart.
- Persons of any age who have never had the vaccine should be vaccinated within 3 to 5 days of being in contact with an infected person, which may prevent or modify disease.

Other recommendations for prevention:

- The parents of premature infants, immunocompromised persons, and pregnant women should contact their medical provider if exposed to a person with chickenpox.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash hands thoroughly and often.
- Stay away from others until the blisters are dry and crusted.

Can you get chickenpox if you've been vaccinated?

98% of people are protected from getting chickenpox after receiving 2 doses of chickenpox vaccine.

For further information visit:

- http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/list_varicel.htm
- <http://www.vaccines.gov/diseases/chickenpox/>

**Report chickenpox cases to the Saint Louis
County Department of Health by calling
314-615-1630**