

# Chickenpox

## Definition

- Chickenpox is a viral rash all over the body
- It starts as small red bumps. The bumps change to clear and then cloudy blisters. The blisters change to open sores, and finally they scab over.

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Chickenpox starts with some small water blisters or pimples on the head and back.
- Rash covers the entire body within a day.
- Chickenpox progress from tiny water blisters to dry brown crusts within 24 hours.
- Repeated crops of new chickenpox keep appearing for 4 to 5 days. Therefore, tiny blisters, sores and scabs are all present at same time.
- Sores (ulcers) can also occur in the mouth, on eyelids, and on genitals.
- Fever is most often present. The more the rash, the higher the fever.
- Main complication: skin infections from scratching.

### Diagnosis

- Chickenpox can usually be diagnosed by how they look. Tests are not needed.
- Known contact with a child with chickenpox 10 - 21 days earlier helps.

### Cause

- Chickenpox is caused by the Varicella virus

### How It Is Spread

- From fluid inside the blisters and from respiratory secretions. Very contagious.
- Incubation period: 10-21 days.
- Contagious period: 6 or 7 days.

### Prevention of Spread to Others

- Avoid all contact with other children until the sores have crusted over (7 days).
- Chickenpox can be prevented by getting the varicella vaccine.
- The vaccine has made it uncommon.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Chickenpox is an unpleasant disease
- Your job is to keep your child comfortable and to limit the itching.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Cool Baths For Itching:**
  - For itching, give cool or lukewarm baths for 10 minutes as often as needed.
  - Caution: Avoid any chill.
  - Can add baking soda 2 ounces (60 ml) per tub.
  - Baths don't spread the chickenpox.
  - Do not use soaps. Reason: Soaps cause dry skin and make the itch worse.
3. **Calamine Lotion for Itching:**
  - Put calamine lotion on the chickenpox that itch the most.
  - You can also rub an ice cube on the itchy spots for 10 minutes.
  - Don't use any lotion containing Benadryl in it. Reason: It can be absorbed across the skin. Too much can cause side effects in kids.
4. **Allergy Medicine for Itching:**
  - If itching becomes severe, give a dose of Benadryl.
  - No prescription needed. Age limit: 1 year and older.
5. **Try Not to Scratch:**
  - Try not to let your child pick and scratch at the sores. This can lead to infected sores.
  - Trim fingernails.
  - Wash hands often with soap.
6. **Fever Medicine:**
  - Give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) for fever above 102° F (39° C).
  - Note: lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
  - Never use aspirin. Reason: Risk of Reye syndrome.
  - Also, don't use ibuprofen. Reason: May increase risk of bad strep skin infections.
7. **Fluids and Soft Diet:**
  - The mouth and throat ulcers are painful. Try to get your child to drink adequate fluids.
  - Goal: Keep your child well hydrated.
  - Cold drinks, milk shakes, popsicles, slushes, and sherbet are good choices.
  - Solids. Offer a soft diet. Also, avoid foods that need much chewing. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Note: Fluid intake is more important than eating any solids.
  - For babies, you may need to stop the bottle. Give fluids by cup, spoon or syringe instead. Reason: The nipple can increase the pain.
8. **Liquid Antacid for Mouth Pain:**
  - For mouth pain, use a liquid antacid such as Mylanta or the store brand. Give 4 times per day as needed. After meals often is a good time. Age: Use for children over 1 year old.
  - For children over age 6, can use 1 teaspoon (5 ml) as a mouth wash. Keep it on the ulcers as long as possible. Then can spit it out or swallow it.
  - For younger children age 1 to 6, put a few drops in the mouth. Or put it on with a cotton swab.
  - Caution: Do not use regular mouth washes, because they sting.
9. **For Pain With Passing Urine:**
  - For girls with painful genital ulcers, put petroleum jelly on them as needed.
  - For severe pain, use a numbing ointment such as 2.5% xylocaine ointment. No prescription is needed. Use this 4 times per day.
  - For males with painful pox on the tip of the penis, this also works.
10. **What to Expect:**
  - Expect new chickenpox every day for 4 or 5 days.
  - Most children get 400 to 500 chickenpox.

#### 11. Return to School:

- Your child can go back to school after all the sores have crusted over.
- Most often, this is day 6 or 7 of the rash.

### Call Your Doctor If

- Chickenpox look infected (draining pus, scabs become larger)
- Gets any new chickenpox after day 6
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

#### Pediatric Care Advice

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