



INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Chickenpox Patient Information

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is an infection caused by the “Varicella” virus that shows up as an itchy skin rash with blisters and a fever. The rash can spread over the body sometimes inside the mouth and eyelids. Chickenpox can be very serious and can be life-threatening in babies and people with weakened immune systems.

How does chickenpox make people sick?

People usually have a fever, aches, and headache the day before the rash appears. Some of the serious problems caused by chickenpox are: skin infection, pneumonia, swelling of the brain, and dehydration (not having enough water in your body).

How do I know if I have chickenpox?

A doctor can usually diagnose chickenpox just by looking at the rash. If in doubt, a blood sample can be sent off for testing (Varicella).

How is chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox spreads easily through the air when a person who has the disease coughs or sneezes. It can also spread by touching the person’s blisters. Chickenpox can spread up to 1-2 days before the rash with blisters appears up until all the blisters have dried up. Chickenpox can be contagious up to 1-2 days before the rash appears and until all the blisters have dried up. It is very contagious. It is easily transmissible.

How can I prevent my chances of getting chickenpox?

The best protection from chickenpox is vaccination. Most people can safely be vaccinated, but a health professional will make the final decision if you should not be vaccinated for some reason.

How do you treat chickenpox?

Treatment is mainly aimed at relieving the symptoms (Calamine lotion™, oatmeal bath, antihistamines, Tylenol™). In some cases an antiviral medication may be started for people who are at greater risk of complications.

Who is at greater risk for complications?

Babies less than a month old, people with weakened immune systems (cancer, chemotherapy, HIV, steroids) and pregnant women who have not had chickenpox are at greater risk for complications.

What to do if I go home?

Because you can pass on chickenpox until all the blisters are dry and crusted, you need to avoid coming in contact with people who have not had chickenpox or who are at risk of complications. Stay home for that period of time.

What does the Hospital do to prevent the spread of chickenpox?

If you are coming to the hospital, you will be placed in a private room on precautions. The room allows for special air filtering and the staff will be wearing a special mask, gloves and most likely a gown to cover their uniform. You will remain in the isolation room until all the blisters have dried up.

If you have questions about the information in this document, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control at 613-721-2000, ext. 3777.

Ottawa Public Health:

<https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/diseases.aspx>