

VARICELLA (Chickenpox)



Varicella, also called chickenpox, is a very contagious disease. It is caused by the varicella-zoster virus. The virus causes an itchy, blister-like rash, tiredness, and fever. The rash first appears on the stomach, back, and face and can spread over the entire body. The virus is easily spread from person to person.

How is it spread?

- ▶ The chickenpox virus spreads easily by contact with the virus particles that come from the blisters and breathing the tiny droplets when an infected person breathes or talks.
- ▶ A person who has the virus can spread the disease one to two days before the rash and until all their chickenpox blisters have formed into scabs, typically five to seven days.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms that may appear one to two days before rash:

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Tiredness
- ▶ Loss of appetite
- ▶ Headache

Description of the rash:

- ▶ Rash that causes itchy, fluid-filled blisters that turn into scabs. The rash usually starts on the middle of the body and spreads to the arms, legs, and face.

What are the treatment options?

- ▶ Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and prevention of skin infections.
- ▶ Calming lotion and colloidal oatmeal baths can help relieve some of the itching.
- ▶ Keep fingernails trimmed short to prevent skin infections that may occur if scabs are scratched.

How can it be prevented?

The best way to prevent chickenpox is to get the vaccine! Talk to your health care provider about protecting your loved ones.

- ▶ Children should get two doses of chickenpox vaccine; the first dose at 12-15 months and the second at four through six years of age.
- ▶ Older children and adults also need to be protected.

For more information on the vaccine, please see: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/varicella.pdf>

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<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph/bcd.htm> | DHSDPHBCD@dhs.wi.gov

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