

Chicken Pox



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Communicable Disease Division
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Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to **chickenpox**. Chickenpox is a disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus.

What are the symptoms of chickenpox?

Symptoms include a blister-like rash, fever, runny nose, and cough. The small, red bumps will blister over in 3–4 days and then form scabs. Blister crops will come out over several days, so the person who has chickenpox will have some red bumps, blisters, and scabbed-over blisters all at the same time. The rash is more noticeable on the trunk than exposed parts of the body and may appear inside the mouth and ears, on the genital areas and scalp.

How is chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox is spread from person to person by direct contact with the fluid from the blisters and through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person with chickenpox is most contagious 1–2 days before the rash appears until right after it appears. An infected person no longer spreads the virus when all the blisters have scabs and no new blisters are forming. Children with chickenpox need to be excluded from childcare or school until all the blisters have formed scabs.

How is chickenpox diagnosed and treated?

A health care provider can identify chickenpox based on the appearance of the rash and exposure history. General comfort measures are all that are needed for most cases of chickenpox. Adults usually get very ill, though a person of any age may develop complications from chickenpox.

How do you control the spread?

Chickenpox may be prevented through vaccination. **Two doses of varicella vaccine** are recommended for all children over 12 months of age without evidence of immunity. Vaccination given within 3–5 days after exposure may help to prevent or lessen the disease. Have your child vaccinated against chickenpox:

- If your child has never had chickenpox disease
- If your child has never been vaccinated against chickenpox
- If your child has had only one dose of vaccine

How do I get more information?

For more information about chickenpox, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press "0". If the shot is not available through your healthcare provider, you may get the shot from a children's mobile immunization clinic. Call (253) 798-6410 for a clinic location.