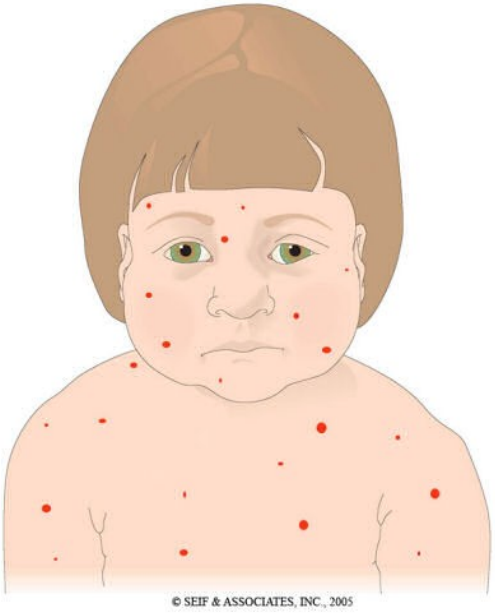
Chickenpox

Chickenpox is a common but serious infection caused by a virus. This infection can spread very easily from person to person. It is most common in children (under 15 years old). If your child has not already had chicken pox, he or she can get a chicken pox shot after 12 months of age. Children less than 13 years old need one dose of the vaccine. Teenagers and adults need two doses given 4 to 6 weeks apart.

HOME CARE



Children with chickenpox may have these problems:

- Fever.
- An itchy red rash that starts on the front or back of the body. It can start out looking like bug bites. This rash then spreads all over the body. It usually starts as red bumps and then changes to a red fluid filled blister. These blisters dry up and form scabs.
- The child may feel sick to his or her stomach and throw up.
- The child may have stomach pain or not be hungry.
- Do not let your children be around others who may have chickenpox. Children with chickenpox will be sick for about 7 to 10 days.
- Do not send your child to school or daycare until all of the sores have dried or crusted.

What to do for chickenpox:

- Take the child's temperature at least every four hours in the way your doctor has told you.
  - Only give your child over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as told by your doctor. **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN TO CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE WITH CHICKENPOX. Aspirin may increase the chance of developing a serious illness called Reye's Syndrome. This may happen after the child has had chicken pox or flu.**
  - If your child has a fever, dress him or her in light clothes. You can bathe your child in room-temperature water to help lower the fever.
- Give the child lots of fluids to drink such as water, or electrolyte replacement fluids such as an oral rehydration solutions and juices. You can give your child soda, but be sure it is regular (not diet) soda and does not have caffeine.
- To help with the itching:
  - Give the child baths with room-temperature water that has 1/2 cup of baking soda or 1/4 cup of cornstarch added. You can bathe your child as usual up to 3 times a day. Oatmeal soap baths may also be used. Bathe the child at least once a day to clean the skin and prevent infection. Don't use too much soap. This can increase itching and dry the skin.
  - Cover the rash with calamine (not Caladryl®) lotion to help stop the itching.
  - Try to keep the child from scratching. Keep their fingernails short and clean. This will help prevent infection and scarring.
- Keep children away from other young children and others who might catch the disease. Do not send them to day care or school. Adults should not go to work.
- The person can no longer spread the disease when all the blisters are dried up. Children can go back to school or day care and adults can go back to work once the blisters are dried up.
- Chickenpox is very dangerous to persons with low resistance. Call your doctor right away if a family member is exposed that has any of the following conditions:

- Cancer
- HIV
- Is receiving chemotherapy
- Is taking steroid medicine

- Chickenpox can be very dangerous to pregnant women. If you are pregnant and have never had chickenpox, call your clinic or doctor right away if you have been exposed to chickenpox.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD:

- You or your child has a temperature by mouth above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**
- Has ear pain, or is pulling at his or her ears
- Has a sore throat.
- Has a severe cough.
- Has shortness of breath.
- Is throwing up for more than 4 hours.
- Has any infection of the pox (look for pus, swelling, or red and sore areas).
- Has difficulty walking.
- Acts very different than usual.
- Is hard to wake up or is much sleepier than usual.
- Has signs of dehydration (see list).
- If there is a pox on the inside of the eyelids.
- **Bring your child to the Emergency Room if he or she:**
  - Has fewer tears than normal.
  - Has a dry mouth.
  - Is peeing less than normal.
  - Has fewer wet diapers than normal.
  - Has pee with a strong odor.
  - Is eating less than normal.
  - Has a sunken soft spot on his or her head.

If you come to the clinic or Emergency room, be sure to:

- Tell the staff right away that the child has chickenpox or that you think they may have chickenpox.
- Keep the child away from other people as much as possible so he or she does not spread the virus.

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