

12th October 2017

Dear Parents,

**We recently have had a case of Chickenpox reported at the school.
As such we provide the following information to parents.**

Chickenpox

Chickenpox (varicella) is a highly contagious viral disease caused by varicella-zoster virus (VZV). The main symptom is a blistering skin rash. Outbreaks are more common in Winter and early Spring. A vaccine is available.

Chickenpox is spread by air-borne droplets from the upper respiratory tract (coughing, sneezing) or from the fluid in the skin blisters (lesions). An infected person is contagious for 1–2 days (possibly five days) before the onset of the rash and remains infectious until the blisters form scabs (usually around day five of the illness). Children with chickenpox should not go to school or kinder until the last blister has dried. You should tell your child's school or kinder if your child gets chickenpox, as other children may need to be immunised or treated.

For most healthy people, chickenpox is mild and the person recovers fully without specific treatment. However, complications occur in approximately one per cent of cases. It is more severe in adults and anyone of any age with impaired immunity. Immunisation is the best way to prevent chickenpox.

Symptoms

The symptoms of chickenpox include:

- The person develops a low-grade fever.
- The person experiences general discomfort, illness or lack of wellbeing (malaise).
- A skin rash appears as little blisters surrounded by irregular-shaped patches of inflamed skin ('dew drop on a rose petal').
- The rash usually starts on the body, then progresses to include the head and limbs.
- Ulcers may develop in certain areas, including the mouth and vagina.
- The rash is intensely itchy.
- The little blisters burst and develop crusts, usually about day five.

Treatment

In most cases, chickenpox is mild and resolves by itself without the need for specific treatment.

Traditional treatment methods aim to relieve symptoms and include:

- Bed rest
- Extra fluids to drink – to avoid dehydration
- Paracetamol to bring down the fever – aspirin should be avoided because of a possible increased risk of complications
- Lukewarm baths with baking soda or oatmeal added to the water – a cup of oatmeal can be put into an old, clean pair of panty hose, tied and left in the bath while the water runs)
- Cream, such as calamine lotion, to reduce the itching – if you have a skin problem like eczema, you may need to ask a health professional about other creams you can use
- Avoidance of salty or citrus foods
- Babies and young children may need to wear mittens to prevent scratching.

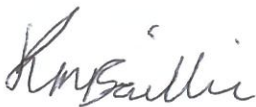
In cases of severe illness, treatment with an antiviral medication (such as acyclovir) may be needed.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Maternal and Child Health nurse
- Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- National Immunisation Infoline Tel. 1800 671 811
- Your local pharmacist
- Your local council immunisation service

Things to remember

- Chickenpox (varicella) is a highly contagious viral disease; in most cases, it is mild and resolves by itself.
- The main symptom is the characteristic blistering skin rash.
- Treatment options aim to relieve symptoms and include bed rest, calamine lotion and lukewarm baths.
- A vaccine is available to protect against chickenpox.



Kerryn Baillie
Principal