

## Chickenpox

### Overview:

- Chickenpox is a fast-spreading viral infection that causes acute fever and a skin rash.
- It usually appears on the face, chest and back and then spreads to the rest of the body.
- The best way to prevent it is by taking a vaccine, which is safe and effective.
- A person becomes infected and is contagious before the rash appears and for a week after the rash disappearance.
- If a person develops Chickenpox, they become immune to the virus for life.

### Introduction:

Chicken pox is a viral infection transmitted via the respiratory tract, causing itching and a rash with small blisters filled with fluids. It is easily transmitted from one person to the other, usually lasting about five to ten days.

### Cause:

Infection is caused by the varicella zoster virus, which is transmitted either by breathing the spray of the infected person in the air after coughing or sneezing, or by contact with the rash only and not contact with the patient.

### Chickenpox and Shingles:

If a person has chickenpox, they can be susceptible to Shingles which is caused by the same virus.

After the patient recovers from chickenpox, the virus is stored in neurons, can reactivate and reappear after several years in the form of Shingles.



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### Symptoms:

The main symptom of chickenpox is a red rash consisting of patches or blisters, which may first appear on the face and chest, and then spread to the rest of the body including inside the mouth, eyelids, or genital area.

some signs might appear before the skin rash, **including:**

- A fever of 38° C or more
- Headache.
- General exhaustion
- Muscle pains
- Loss of appetite

### When to see a doctor:

- when the rash spreads to one or both eyes
- When a swelling, redness or heat is felt in the rash, indicating a possible secondary bacterial infection.
- Appearance of other symptoms with the rash, such as: Dizziness, confusion, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, difficulty walking, severe cough, vomiting, stiff neck or fever higher than 38.9° C.

### Diagnosis:

- Clinical examination.
- Lab tests.

### Incubation Period:

It usually takes one to three weeks for symptoms to appear after infection.

### Risk factors:

- Not getting the virus before.
- Not taking chickenpox vaccine.
- Immunosuppressive drugs.
- Diseases that weaken immunity, such as cancer and others.



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### **Most vulnerable groups:**

- Newborns
- Pregnant women
- The elderly

### **Complications:**

- Bacterial infections of the skin, bones, joints or bloodstream.
- Septicemia (sepsis).
- Dryness.
- Pneumonia
- Encephalitis

### **Treatment:**

There is no final treatment, but your doctor may prescribe antipruritic and pain relievers that help relieve symptoms while the body fights infection.

### **Prevention:**

The chickenpox vaccine is the best way to prevent chickenpox. It is highly effective and safe. Most people who get vaccinated will not get chickenpox, and if they do the vaccine significantly lessens the severity of chickenpox and only a few red spots and blisters may appear with a mild fever or even no fever at all.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

- **When is Chickenpox contagious?**

It is contagious in the incubation period (i.e. before the rash appears and blisters form) and for a week after the rash has passed.

- **Can I catch the smallpox virus again if I get it earlier?**

Getting Chickenpox once means you won't get it again. This is called lifelong immunity; but in rare cases a person may get it again.



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**Misconceptions:**

- **I can use Aspirin when getting chickenpox**

Do not use aspirin or aspirin-containing products. The use of aspirin in children with chickenpox has been associated with Reye's syndrome, a severe disease that affects the liver and brain and can cause death.

**Clinical Health Education Department**  
For further questions kindly contact us via email:  
[Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa](mailto:Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa)