

CHICKENPOX FACT SHEET

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very contagious disease caused by a virus. It causes a blister like rash, itching, tiredness and a fever. It spreads easily, mainly when a person touches or breathes in the virus particles that come from the chickenpox blisters. It can also spread through tiny droplets that get into the air when someone who has chickenpox talks, coughs or sneezes.

Complications

Chickenpox is usually mild in children, but the itching can be very uncomfortable. In some cases, it can cause serious problems such as skin infections, dehydration, pneumonia, and swelling of the brain. Chickenpox can even be life-threatening, especially with people with weakened immune systems and pregnant women.

How long is a person with chickenpox contagious?

The period of infection extends 1 to 2 days *before* the onset of rash until lesions have formed crusts to 4-7 days *after* the onset of rash. Vaccinated persons with varicella may develop lesions but do not crust. Individuals should stay home from work or school until no new lesions appear within a 24-hour period.

Symptoms: Usually last 7 to 10 days.



Blister-like rash that can spread all over the body



Fever



Headache



Tiredness

Vaccination

The chickenpox vaccine is the best way to help prevent chickenpox. The 1st dose is given at 12-15 months and the 2nd dose at 4-6 years old. Two doses of the vaccine are more effective and prevent most, but not all cases of chickenpox. People 13 years and older who have never had chickenpox or received the vaccine should get 2 doses at least 28 days apart.

There are some people who should not get this vaccine (i.e. those with a weakened immune system, severe allergy, immune system problem) and they must consult with their doctor before receiving this vaccine. Pregnant women should wait until after they give birth or women who plan to get pregnant, should wait 1 month after getting vaccinated.

Immunity

Evidence of immunity to chickenpox includes:

- Written documentation of age-appropriate vaccination
- Laboratory evidence of immunity or laboratory confirmation of disease
- Born in the United States before 1980
- Healthcare personnel diagnosis or verification of chickenpox disease
- History of herpes zoster based on healthcare provider diagnosis



For more information: contact your health care provider;
visit www.cdc.gov/chickenpox;
or call the Guam DPHSS Immunization Program at 735-7143.

