



Questions and Answers About **CHICKENPOX**



1. What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very infectious disease. It causes a rash of small red blisters, itching, fever and tiredness. It can lead to severe skin infections, lung infection and brain damage. Children can die from chickenpox complications. Chickenpox is caused by a virus called varicella virus, which is a member of the herpes virus group.

2. How do you get chickenpox?

Chickenpox can spread easily by physical contact with chickenpox blisters or from the cough or sneeze of an infected person. An infected person can spread chickenpox 1 to 2 days before blisters appear and until the blisters form scabs.

3. How do you know if you have chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a red, itchy rash that breaks out on your face, scalp, chest and back, but it can spread across your entire body, including your throat, eyes and vagina.

4. What are the serious health problems you can get from chickenpox?

The serious health problems you can get from chickenpox include bacterial infection of the skin, pneumonia, or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

5. How is chickenpox treated?

Usually, chickenpox does not require medical treatment and the illness is permitted to run its course. However, a doctor may give anti-itch medications to relieve the itchiness. If the illness goes beyond the mild stages, antibiotics or antiviral medications may be prescribed.

6. How can chickenpox be prevented?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting it.

7. Who should get the chickenpox vaccine?

Children one year of age and older should get vaccinated if they have never had chickenpox. A second booster vaccination is now recommended for children from 4 to 6 years of age. Chickenpox vaccination is required for all children attending school including daycare settings, pre-school and kindergarten. Adults who have not had chickenpox should also get vaccinated. However, pregnant women, and persons who have allergies and/or current medical conditions, should talk to their doctor before getting vaccinated.

8. Where can you get the chickenpox vaccine?

Adults should ask their healthcare providers about the vaccine. To find out where to get free shots for adults and children, please call: 1-800-427-8700 or 1-213-351-7800.

Source(s):

1. *Chickenpox*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/>
2. *Chickenpox*. L.A. County Department of Public Health.
<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Diseases/Varicella.htm>
<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip>
3. *Chickenpox*. The Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/chickenpox/DS00053>

For additional resources, please dial 2-1-1 or visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.