



Below is some information on chicken pox that you may find helpful. Be aware of possible symptoms especially if your child has not had the disease and is not vaccinated. Children that have been vaccinated however may still get chicken pox. **Please let the school nurse know if your child does develop chicken pox.**

CHICKENPOX: THE DISEASE AND THE VACCINE

1. What is it?

Chicken pox is a highly contagious viral illness that is spread by breathing in germs from an infected person's nose and throat secretions, and direct contact with the sores. Symptoms include low-grade fever, runny nose, cough, decreased appetite, headache, and fatigue. Chicken pox spots appear on the body about two weeks after exposure. The spots first look like tiny red bumps or bug bites then change into blisters. Five to ten days later they form crusts or scabs and are no longer contagious. The rash is very itchy and can be found anywhere on the body including in the mouth, ears, and eyes. Generally chicken pox is a mild illness but occasionally it can be severe and even life threatening.

2. How is it spread?

It can be spread from person to person through the air, or by contact with fluid from chickenpox blisters.

3. When are you contagious?

When someone becomes infected, the pox usually appear 10 to 21 days later. People become contagious 1 to 2 days before breaking out with the pox. They remain contagious until all blisters are crusted over.

4. How can you prevent chickenpox?

Because chickenpox is airborne and very contagious before the rash appears, it is difficult to avoid. It is possible to catch chickenpox from someone on a different aisle of the supermarket, who doesn't even know they have chickenpox!

The **chickenpox vaccine** is now part of the routine immunization schedule. It is about 100% effective against moderate or severe illness and 85-90% effective against mild chickenpox. Therefore, it is possible to get a mild case even if you have had the vaccine. While the mild cases tend to have only 10-50 pox, they can still be contagious. See your pediatrician if your child develops any spots resembling pox.

What can you do? It is now recommended that children that have not had chicken pox get two doses of the vaccine. Check your child's immunization record or call your pediatrician to see if your child has had the vaccine, called Varivax or Varicella. If there is no record of the vaccine and your child has not had the chicken pox disease, please consider contacting your pediatrician about getting the shot.

Keep your child home if they are ill with fever or rash. They must stay home until all sores (pox) have been crusted over and are fever free for 24 hours.