

Chickenpox

Dear parent or guardian:

Your child recently may have been exposed to **chickenpox**, a disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus.

Symptoms

Symptoms include rash, fever, headache, tiredness, and loss of appetite. The rash is small, red bumps that turn into blisters in 3–4 days, then form scabs. An infected person might have red bumps, blisters, and scabs at the same time. The rash may be more noticeable on the torso than the arms and legs. It may appear inside the mouth and ears or on the genitals and scalp.

Spread

Chickenpox spreads when someone touches the fluid from a blister or breathes the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. An infected person is contagious 1–2 days before the rash appears until all their blisters have scabs and no new blisters are forming. Children with chickenpox should not go to school or childcare until all their blisters have scabs and no new blisters are forming.

Diagnosis and treatment

A healthcare provider can diagnose chickenpox based on the rash and whether your child was around an infected person. Most children who get chickenpox will only need to rest, drink fluids, and be treated for fever and discomfort. Never give aspirin to children.

Serious illness from chickenpox is most common in people who don't have immunity, especially infants, teens, adults, and those who are pregnant or have weakened immune systems. It can cause brain infections, pneumonia, or birth defects. If these people are exposed to chickenpox, call a healthcare provider right away. A dose of vaccine given 3–5 days after exposure can help prevent or lessen the disease.

Prevention

Varicella vaccine prevents chickenpox. Children should get 2 doses of varicella vaccine: the first dose at 12–15 months old and the second at 4–6 years old.

Your child can get varicella vaccine at a healthcare provider's office or a pharmacy. Find other free vaccine locations at tpchd.org/kidsvax.

Learn more

For more info, contact a healthcare provider.