

HEALTH SERVICES – CHICKENPOX

What is Chickenpox? – Chickenpox, also called varicella, is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus of the herpes zoster family. It is spread by direct contact with an infected person or through the air when the infected person coughs or sneezes. Infected persons can spread the disease before they know they have it. People with chickenpox are contagious from about 2 days before the rash develops until all of the blister-like lesions have crusted over, usually 5-7 days after the rash appears.

What are the symptoms? – The incubation period for chickenpox is 10-21 days, which means that symptoms don't show up until 2-3 weeks after exposure. Toward the end of this period, the infected person may feel irritable, achy, and or feverish. Next comes the rash or "pocks" of chickenpox. They usually start as small red spots on the trunk or face, but can spread over the entire body in the next 3-5 days. These lesions fill with fluid, rupture, and finally form crusts or scabs. These blisters are very itchy and may result in permanent scarring.

How is Chickenpox treated? – The usual treatments are aimed at making the infected person more comfortable, and giving pain relievers, plenty of fluids, oatmeal baths, and topical medications designed to relieve itching.

DO NOT USE ASPIRIN OR ANY OTHER MEDICATIONS THAT CONTAIN ASPIRIN OR SALICYLATES FOR FEVER OR SYMPTOMS THAT ACCOMPANY CHICKENPOX OR INFLUENZA (FLU). Many drugs contain these ingredients, so you **MUST** read all labels carefully. A very serious complication can develop called Reye's Syndrome if aspirin is taken.