

Chickenpox (Varicella)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is chickenpox (varicella)?

Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease that spreads easily from person to person. It is caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). It can cause an itchy, blister-like rash. Chickenpox can lead to health problems and hospitalization in serious cases.

How does chickenpox spread?

The virus spreads through the air when someone with chickenpox coughs or sneezes. It can also spread by contact with the blisters. A person with chickenpox can spread it 1 to 2 days before the rash starts and until all the blisters have scabbed over. Chickenpox spreads easily to people who have never had chickenpox or have never received the vaccine.

What are the symptoms of chickenpox?

The most common symptom is a rash. The rash turns into itchy, fluid-filled blisters that scab over. Other symptoms may start 1 to 2 days before the rash. They include, fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, and headache.

Where does the rash appear?

The rash usually starts on the chest, back and face. Then it may spread all over the body.

How long does chickenpox last?

Chickenpox usually lasts for 4 to 7 days. Symptoms may show up before the rash and may not last the entire period of time.

What to do if you think your child has chickenpox?

Talk to your child's doctor about their symptoms and possible treatments. If you do not have a doctor, call 211 for assistance.

How do you prevent chickenpox?

The best way to prevent chickenpox is to get the chickenpox vaccine.



Chickenpox (Varicella)

Frequently Asked Questions

When should you get the chickenpox vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends two doses of the chickenpox vaccine. The first dose is given at 12 to 15 months old. The second dose is recommended at 4 to 6 years old.

Is the vaccine safe?

Chickenpox vaccine is very safe and effective. Most people who get the vaccine will not get chickenpox.

What if I never received the vaccine as a child?

People 13 years and older who have never had chickenpox or received chickenpox vaccine should get two doses. The doses should be at least 28 days apart.

Can you still get chickenpox if you've been vaccinated?

Two doses of the chickenpox vaccine are more than 90% effective at preventing the disease. Some people who have been vaccinated can still get chickenpox, but they usually have milder symptoms.

Does varicella also cause shingles?

Yes, the varicella-zoster virus (VZV) also causes shingles. After chickenpox, the virus remains in the body (dormant). People get shingles when the virus reactivates in their bodies.

Can people with shingles spread chickenpox and shingles?

People with shingles can spread the virus to others. For people who have never had chickenpox or never received the chickenpox vaccine, they will get chickenpox, not shingles.



To learn more visit

[Vaccines for Infants and Young Children](#) OR



**CONNECT WITH A COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE FOR MORE INFORMATION**

CALL: 1 (866) 358-2966 OPTION 5
EMAIL: PHS-IZPHN.HHSA@SDCOUNTY.CA.GOV

