

Chicken Pox is a highly infectious illness easily recognized by the distinctive rash that it causes, which occurs mainly in children.

What to look for

- a very itchy rash that spreads from the torso to the limbs. The rash advances from red spots to blisters with fluid in them that drain and scab over.

Chickenpox, a viral illness characterised by a very itchy red rash, is one of the most common infectious diseases of childhood.

People who have had chickenpox develop lifetime immunity. But the virus remains dormant in the body. People who are wishing to start a family are advised to become vaccinated against this disease before doing so.

Causes

Chickenpox is caused by the herpes zoster virus. It is spread by droplets from a sneeze or cough, or by contact with the clothing, bed linens, or oozing vesicles of an infected person. The incubation period is 7 to 21 days; the disease is most contagious a day before the rash appears and up to 7 days after, or until the rash forms scabs.

Traditional Treatment

Chickenpox is extremely contagious. Keep your child home until most of the vesicles are dry and scabs have fallen off.

Your paediatrician may prescribe an antihistamine, to relieve pain and swelling. Antibiotics are called for if a secondary bacterial skin infection arises or if an adult with chickenpox contracts bacterial pneumonia.

Prevention

- A vaccination is available to prevent this disease.

Pregnancy Concerns

If you have not had chickenpox and are exposed to the virus while pregnant, **contact your doctor immediately.**

When to seek further professional advice

- you think your child has chickenpox.
- the rash produces a greenish discharge
- your child is recovering from chickenpox and begins running a fever, vomiting, has convulsions
- an adult family member gets chickenpox
- you are pregnant, have never had chickenpox, and are exposed to the disease;