



LAKE LAND JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT #272

15506 N. Washington Street P.O. Box 39

Rathdrum, Idaho 83858

Phone: 208.687.0431 Fax: 208.687.1884 Web: lakeland272.org

Communicable Disease Fact Sheet

CHICKENPOX (Varicella)

What is Chickenpox?

- ◆ Chickenpox (varicella) is caused by the varicella-zoster virus (a type of herpes virus).
- ◆ It is usually a mild illness, but may be severe in infants, adults and persons with weakened immune systems.

Symptoms:

- ◆ Chickenpox may begin with a fever and general fatigue.
- ◆ The rash starts as a pimple-like rash that turns into blisters (vesicles) that dry and become scabs in 4 to 5 days.
- ◆ An infected person may have anywhere from only a few pox to more than 500 pox in various stages of healing.

How is it spread?

- ◆ Chickenpox is highly contagious and is spread by direct contact with secretions (such as saliva) from an infected person or through the air from respiratory secretions (i.e. sneezing, coughing).
- ◆ A person can pass chickenpox about 1-2 days before the rash develops, to 5 days after the appearance of the first crop of blisters.
- ◆ The incubation period is 10-21 days after contact with an infected person.

Treatment:

- ◆ **Do not give your child ASPIRIN when ill with chickenpox.** This may lead to a serious illness called Reyes Syndrome.
- ◆ Clip fingernails short to prevent scratching the pox.
- ◆ Baking soda or oatmeal baths may decrease itching.
- ◆ Over-the-counter antihistamines may help relieve the itching. Check with your doctor.

Prevention:

- ◆ The varicella vaccine is recommended as a routine immunization at 12 to 18 months of age and for all children who have not had chickenpox by their 13th birthday.
- ◆ Varicella vaccine protection lasts for years.
- ◆ Rarely, very mild chickenpox may occur in persons who have received the chickenpox vaccine.

Exclusion from school:

- ◆ Students with chickenpox need to stay home from school until there is no new pox and all the blisters have scabbed over. This may take up to five days.
- ◆ Please contact your child's school if you suspect your child has chickenpox.

More information:

- ◆ Call your school nurse at your child's school or at the district office, 687-0431
- ◆ Call your physician.
- ◆ Call Panhandle Health District at 667-3481