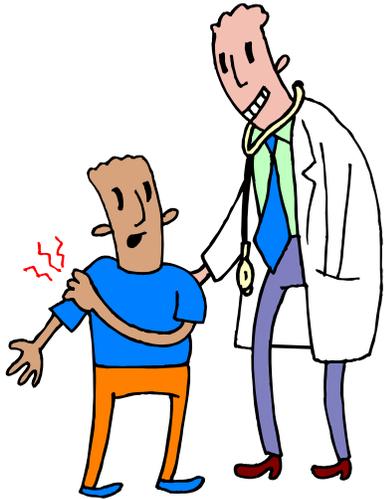


Chicken Pox (Varicella)

What is **Chickenpox**?



Chickenpox is a rash illness caused by a virus. It is usually mild, but can cause serious problems in infants, adults, and persons with impaired immune systems. Chickenpox is highly contagious and 95% of Americans get it by adulthood. There are 4 million cases in the United States every year. It is most common in the late winter and spring.

What are the symptoms of **Chickenpox**?

Chickenpox has a characteristic itchy rash, which starts on the trunk and then spreads. Red bumps turn into blisters that dry and become scabs in 4-5 days. The rash may be the first sign of illness, sometimes accompanied by fever and general malaise, which is usually more severe in adults. An infected person may have only a few lesions on his body or more than 500. Average number of blisters is 300-400. Adults are more likely to have a more serious case of chickenpox.

How do you get it?

Chickenpox is contagious 1-2 days before the rash appears and until all blisters have formed scabs. Chickenpox develops 1-10 days after contact with an infected person. About 90% of persons in a household who have not had chickenpox will get it if exposed to a family member with chickenpox.

How can you protect yourself and your family from **Chickenpox**?

Good health habits like washing your hands after you sneeze or cough or blow your nose will help protect other family members. Chickenpox can be spread from the liquid in the blisters, so be sure to avoid scratching, keep fingernails short and keep hands very clean. There is a vaccine available now for chickenpox, and it is recommended that all children be routinely vaccinated at 12-18 months of age and that all susceptible children receive the vaccine before their 13th birthday. Scratching can cause serious infections and scarring. Try soothing oatmeal or baking soda baths and keep fingernails clean.

Any questions, contact Volusia County Health Department, (386) 274-0651 or (386) 274-0633.