

CHICKENPOX - VARICELLA

SYMPTOMS: A slight fever, mild cold symptoms and fatigue are early symptoms of chickenpox. In a few days, there will be skin eruptions which begin as a red bumps for several hours, turn into a blisters for 3-4 days and finally become a crusty scab. The lesions commonly occur in successive crops and tend to be more abundant on covered surfaces of the body.

DIAGNOSIS: Laboratory tests may be used to diagnose chickenpox but are rarely necessary.

TRANSMISSION: Chickenpox is spread by direct contact with the fluid from the blisters of someone who has chickenpox or shingles. It may also be spread by airborne droplets from the respiratory tract of someone who has chickenpox or shingles. Articles of clothing freshly soiled with discharges from the blister fluid or mucus membranes of infected persons can also transmit the disease. It is the fluid from the blisters that is infective, not the scabs. Chickenpox is highly communicable. Chickenpox is generally communicable from 1 to 2 days before the onset of the rash and for 5 to 6 days after the beginning of the blisters. It is generally 2 to 3 weeks from the time of exposure until the occurrence of symptoms. Pregnant women should notify their doctor if they have been exposed to chickenpox. A vaccine for chickenpox is now available.

TREATMENT: Treatment is based on trying to keep the person comfortable and preventing the lesions from being scratched. Your physician may recommend a topical or oral medication for itching if it is a problem.

SCHOOL IMPLICATIONS: Children must remain home from school at least 5 or 6 days from when the blisters first appeared or until all of the blisters have scabbed over.