

Chickenpox (Varicella)

Chickenpox (varicella) is an acute viral illness characterized by a rapid onset of fever, fatigue, and a generalized eruption of the skin. Each lesion begins as a small dewdrop-like blister that scabs over in 3–4 days. These lesions tend to be more abundant on the trunk than on the arms and legs. Lesions in the eyes and mouth may also occur.

A vaccine is available to prevent the disease. However, sometimes people who have had the vaccine will still get chickenpox (called 'breakthrough disease'). If vaccinated people do get chickenpox, it is usually very mild. They will have fewer spots which may not appear typical and may not have vesicles (blisters), and they are less likely to have a fever, and usually recover faster.

If a pregnant woman gets varicella during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy, her baby has a 1 in a 100 risk of having serious birth defects. Pregnant women who have been exposed to somebody with chickenpox should contact their doctor immediately.

Transmission of this highly contagious disease is person-to-person by direct contact, through droplets or airborne spread of secretions of the respiratory tract, or indirectly through articles freshly soiled by discharges from vesicles (blisters) and mucous membranes of infected persons.

Persons with varicella are considered infectious from 1–2 days before the rash appears and until all lesions are crusted over (average range, 4–7 days after rash onset).

Exclude students with chickenpox from school until all lesions have crusted.

[Chicken Pox Vaccine Information](#)