

Children's Emergency Department

Chickenpox: Parent/Carer discharge Information



Chickenpox is an infection caused by the varicella virus. It cannot be treated with antibiotics. It is very contagious, easy to catch and easily spread by prolonged contact with an individual with chickenpox or from fluid droplets in the air from them coughing.

The rash usually starts 10-21 days after being exposed to someone with the infection. The most common signs are a mild fever, itchy rash with blisters, feeling tired and miserable. The rash usually starts on the chest, back or face before moving to other areas including the mouth. At first the rash looks like small pimples that later become crops of blisters full of fluid.

A person with chickenpox is infectious to others two days before the rash develops until the last blister has dried and scabbed - the fluid in the blisters contains live virus. Most children are unwell for five to seven days and the rash lasts six to eight days. Children and adults of any age can get chickenpox but it is more common in children. It is rare but possible to get it more than once.

Complications do occur, the most common being a secondary infection of the spots.

Treatment is usually for the symptoms only. There are many over the counter preparations available at pharmacies. Only children with severe infection or with underlying serious medical conditions are given anti-viral



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medication. Children with eczema need to be careful as they can get severe chickenpox.

What should I do now?

- Make sure your child drinks plenty of fluids: sips of water / juice, soups and ice lollies
- Do not let them overheat as this makes the itching worse
- Keep them at home until the last spot has dried to a blister scab

What medication can I give my child?

- If your child is miserable and/or feverish give Paracetamol 4 – 6 hourly, the last given at Ibuprofen is not recommended for children with chickenpox.

Returning to nursery/school

Children should be kept away from school until the spots are crusted over and **air travel is not allowed for five days** after the appearance of the last spot

When should I seek medical advice?

- If they develop a high fever, become drowsy or a non-blanching rash
- If they get large red sore areas around the rash as this implies secondary infection
- If they develop breathing problems or blueness around the mouth
- If they develop difficulty walking or poor co-ordination of normal movements
- If your child is unable to eat and drink due to sores in the mouth, or unable to pass urine due to sores on the genitals causing severe pain and discomfort

For further advice/information:

- Call NHS 111 (24 hours a day)
- Contact your GP

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 6934 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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