



# Chickenpox (Varicella Zoster)

## What is Chickenpox?

- Chickenpox is an acute contagious viral disease, caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). Once a person has the disease, they usually have lifetime immunity. VZV is the same virus that causes shingles.

## What are symptoms that could occur?

- Symptoms can range from very mild to severe
- Rash that turns into itchy, fluid-filled blisters that eventually turn into scabs (around one week)
- Rash may spread all over the body and can appear on mucous membranes, such as the mouth, throat and eye
- Other symptoms include high fever, tiredness, loss of appetite and headache
- Symptoms usually appear 2 – 3 weeks after exposure, averaging 14 – 16 days

## How is it spread?

- It is very contagious
- Breathing in the virus droplets from other individuals when they are sneezing and coughing
- Coming into direct contact with the fluid in the blisters on objects soiled by the ill person
- Most contagious 1 – 2 days before rash erupts continuing until all lesions are crusted
- May also be spread from people with shingles

## How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation who may recommend lotions, bath preparations or medications to relieve itching
- Keeping the nails short can prevent scratching and infecting the rash
- Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever and discomfort as needed

## How can chickenpox be prevented?

- Varicella vaccine is effective in preventing disease or reducing severity of disease

## Are there complications?

- Most people recover without any problems
- Those with immunity disorders, the liver, brain and kidney can be damaged, or death can occur
- Severe complications can occur
- Bacterial infections can occur from scratching the rash

## Should the sick individual be isolated?

- Yes. Until lesions have crusted over, not more than 10 days

## When can the individual return to the general population?

- When all lesions are dry and crusted, not more than 10 days; and person is feeling well

## Should facilities do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended.

## If I have any other questions, whom can I contact?

- Call the Genesee County Health Department at 810-257-1017