

# Chicken Pox (Varicella)

Chickenpox is an acute, infectious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV) and is most commonly seen in children under 10 years old. This virus can also cause shingles (herpes zoster) which tends to be more common in adults. The disease can be more serious in adults, particularly pregnant women.

## Transmission

Varicella is transmitted directly by personal contact or droplet spread.

The secondary infection rate from household contact with a case of chickenpox can be as high as 90%.

**Incubation period** is around 11- 21

days.

The most infectious time is 2 days prior to eruption of vesicles

## Symptoms

Chickenpox has a sudden onset with fever, runny nose, cough and a generalised rash. The rash starts with blisters which then scab over. Several 'crops' of blisters occur so that at any one time there will be scabs in various stages of development.

The rash tends to be more noticeable on the trunk than on exposed parts of the body and may also appear inside the mouth and on the scalp. Some infections can be mild or without symptoms.

**Exclusion-** Although the usual exclusion period is 5 days, all lesions should be crusted over before children return to nursery or school.



## Pregnancy and chicken pox.

It is essential that any pregnant staff should contact their GP/Midwife for advice as soon as any contact with a case of chicken pox is identified.

Please contact the infection control team on 01744 457314 for further advice/support.  
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