

Chickenpox Fact Sheet



What is Chickenpox?

Varicella, also known as chickenpox, is a common and highly infectious childhood disease that is found worldwide. Most people have a mild illness, but the illness can be life threatening for newborns and people with depressed immune systems.

The varicella-zoster virus also causes [shingles](#). After chickenpox, the virus remains in the body (dormant). People get shingles when the virus reactivates in their bodies after they have already had chickenpox which can be very painful.

What are the symptoms?

The first symptom is the onset of a fever, usually followed by symptoms such as a headache, runny nose, and a general feeling of being unwell.

The most noticeable symptom of varicella is an itchy blister like rash. The blister like rash may appear on all areas of the body, including on the scalp and in the mouth and throat. The rash first appears on the chest, back, and face and then spreads to the rest of the body. Varicella varies in severity from very mild, with just a few spots, to severe, with fever and a widespread rash. The more severe form is seen more often in adults.

Symptoms appear 10 to 21 days (about 3 weeks) after infection and most commonly at 14-16 days (about 2 and a half weeks).



fever

headache

blister

How is it transmitted?

A person is most contagious from 1 to 2 days before the onset of rash until the skin lesions crust over.

Chickenpox spreads easily, mainly when a person touches or breathes in the virus particles that come from chickenpox. It can also spread through tiny droplets that get into the air when someone who has chickenpox breathes or talks, for example.

If one person in the household has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.



How is it managed?

Varicella can be prevented by immunization.



What do I do if I have symptoms?

People who have or suspect that they have chickenpox should avoid public places for at least 5 days after the rash appears. If you are sick stay home and phone KAUST Health for advice.

Taken from: [CDC](#)