



## Chickenpox

4th March 2024

Dear Parents,

There has been an incidence of chicken pox in Year 2 and we thought you would welcome some information about this infectious disease.

### Identification

Chicken pox has a sudden onset with a slight fever and red spots on the skin, mostly on the covered parts of the body. The spots are red and last only for a few hours and then they change to little vesicles (like very small blisters). These stay for 3-4 days, gradually drying up and leaving a scab. They also occur in the mouth, upper respiratory tract and the front of the eyeball. They come in crops, so that the first rash may be followed by new spots 2 or 3 days later and possibly more spots 2 or 3 days later still. The temperature may rise as each crop of spots appears. It is caused by the same virus which causes shingles in older people. The spots are the same, but in shingles they are closely grouped together, along the path of a particular nerve, on one side of the body only. The itchiness of the spots can be soothed by the application of calamine lotion.

The Mode of Spread is from person to person by direct contact or by droplets spread in the air (from nose and mouth secretions) or from contact with clothes soiled by discharge from the vesicles or the nose/mouth of infected persons.

Incubation Period i.e. from the time of catching the illness to the appearance of the rash is 2-3 weeks most commonly 14 days. A person with chickenpox is infectious from two days before the spots first appear until they have all crusted over (commonly about five days after onset of the rash). A child with chickenpox should stay off school or nursery for five days from the onset of the rash and until all the lesions have crusted. While infectious, they should keep away from at-risk people who may develop a severe illness if they get chickenpox.

Second attacks are rare, but a person who has had chicken pox in early life may develop shingles in later life. In temperate zones chicken pox usually occurs in winter and early spring. It mostly affects children under 10 years of age and with increasing age the illness is more severe.

Persons at risk: Some children and adults are at special risk of serious problems if they catch chickenpox. They include : pregnant women, new-born babies and, people with a weakened immune system. These people should seek medical advice as soon as they are exposed to the chickenpox virus or they develop chickenpox symptoms.

N.B. As with any infectious illness, during the period of illness the child should be kept on a light diet of water, fruit juice (not orange juice), fruit (not oranges in this part of the world), vegetables (raw or cooked - but not fried), light vegetable soup, wholemeal bread, toast or brown rice. Cheese, milk and yoghurt should be avoided during this time. While there is a rise in temperature, it is preferable to stick to fluids only i.e: water and fruit juice.

For further information please see:<http://www.patient.co.uk/health/chickenpox-in-children-under-12>.

Yours sincerely,

Kathy Main  
Prep School Nurse

