

Useful websites

www.valuingpeople.gov.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs

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Date of publication: Jan 2004

Reviewed: April 2009

Date of review: April 2012

Date of CGSG: June 2009

Reference: 334/09

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CHICKEN POX (VARICELLA)

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Infection Prevention and Control Department

Sunderland Royal Hospital

What Is Chicken Pox?

Chicken Pox (Varicella) is an acute viral disease with a sudden onset of slight fever, general aches and pains and a skin eruption that lasts for a few days and may leave small scabs.

The incubation period is commonly 13 to 17 days. In children Chicken Pox is usually a mild disease but in adults the disease may be more severe.

How Chicken Pox Is Spread?

Chicken Pox is one of the most easily transmitted diseases, especially during the early stages of the infection. It is transmitted by droplet infection and by articles freshly soiled with discharge from vesicles and nasal secretions of infected people.

You will be infectious from about 5 days before the onset of the rash and until 5 days after the appearance of the first crop of vesicles or until the vesicles stop discharging.

Second attacks of Chicken Pox are very rare. However, the virus remains inactive in the body and may re-appear years later as Herpes Zoster (Shingles) in a proportion of adults.

Admission to Hospital

On admission to hospital you may be admitted to a side-room in order to prevent the spread of infection.

Visitors, especially children who have not previously had Chicken Pox, should be warned of the risk of contracting the disease.

Visitors who are in the first or the last 3 months of pregnancy and who have **NOT** previously had Chicken Pox should be advised against having contact with the infected person.

Treatment

The main treatment usually required is to keep the skin lesions clean in order to prevent secondary bacteria infections. If the rash is causing irritation, a topical application of Calamine or Caladryl lotion may be applied.

At home articles soiled by discharges from the nose, throat and lesions, should be washed thoroughly in a domestic washing machine, preferably on a hot wash cycle, unless this will damage the materials concerned.