

Chicken Pox

Chicken pox (varicella) is a **contagious disease**—meaning it spreads easily from person to person—caused by a virus. Most children get a **rash** that starts as red spots which become clear blisters. They may be found anywhere in or around the mouth, eyes, ears, vagina, and penis, or anywhere on the skin. The rash usually lasts about **1 week** and itches. Your child may have a fever for the first few days. The illness is no longer contagious once all the sores have crusted over (in about 7 days). At this time the child may return to school. Other children who have not had chicken pox and are exposed to it may get it within 3 weeks. There is now a Chicken Pox vaccine available for children over the age of 1 year. See your physician for more information.

Home Treatment:

- Keep your child out of school (but remember to notify the school) and away from other children who have not had chicken pox until all the sores have crusted over.
- Give your child acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®, Tempra®, or Panadol®) for pain or fever. **Do not give your child aspirin.**
- Giving your child a cool bath several times a day may help the discomfort and itching. Putting baking soda, Aveeno®, or oatmeal in your bath may be helpful.
- Calamine lotion applied to the spots on your child's body may help. (**Do not** apply Benadryl® or Caladryl® preparations to the skin.)
- Keep your child's fingernails short and clean, and wash your child's hands with soap frequently.

- Covering your child's hands with cotton socks will stop them from scratching, especially during sleep.
- To decrease itching, give your child Benadryl® liquid (taken by mouth), especially at bedtime.
- Allow normal activity as long as your child seems comfortable.

Contact the doctor if:

- Your child has fever of over 100°F (37.8°C) oral, or 101°F (38.3°C) rectal; for infants under 3 months, temperature of over 100.4°F (38°C) rectal, after sores have crusted over.
- Your child has a severe cough or difficulty in breathing.
- Your child has persistent vomiting.
- Your child has severe headaches.
- Your child shows signs of unusual behavior, such as drowsiness, irritability, or confusion.
- Your child has pus under scabs.

Child may return to school once all the sores have crusted over (dried) — in about 7 days.

Products listed are available in your pharmacy. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names. Any similar products may be used.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If your child has persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care provider.

©1995 Kaiser Permanente. All rights reserved.
SCPMG Regional Health Education and Health Promotion
MH-0124-EI (5/98)