



Infection Prevention & Control
Fact Sheet

CHICKENPOX

Varicella-zoster virus (VZV)

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very contagious viral disease that causes an itchy outbreak of skin blisters.

Chickenpox can be a very serious infection particularly in patients and residents with a weak immune system.



What are the symptoms?

Symptoms, if present, can range from mild to severe. Common initial symptoms are runny nose, headache, fever, general feeling of tiredness, or appearance of a blister. A rash may not be the first sign.

After coming in contact with the chickenpox virus, it can take 2-3 weeks for symptoms to start, although you may be contagious as soon as 10 days after you are in contact with the virus.

This means that you are considered contagious for approximately 14 days (starting 10 days after your first exposure) but can be longer than 14 days depending on how many repeat exposures you have had.

How is it transmitted?

Chickenpox spreads easily. It is most contagious 1 or 2 days before the rash appears.

It spreads from person to person through direct contact with the virus. You can get chickenpox if you touch a blister, or the liquid from a blister. You can also get chickenpox if you touch the spit of a person who has chickenpox. The virus enters the body by the nose or mouth and can make you sick also.

It can also spread through the air, if you are near someone with chickenpox who is coughing or sneezing.

If you cannot remember whether or not you've had chickenpox or you've been near someone who has it, you may be at risk of spreading the chickenpox virus to others. A blood test can be done to determine if you are immune to the virus.

What should I do if I haven't had chickenpox and have been in contact with it?

- You may be asked not to visit.
- If permitted to visit, you may be asked to wear a mask.
- Do not visit any other patients in the hospital.
- If you are feeling unwell, have cold-like symptoms, a rash, or a fever, do not visit. These could be the first symptoms of chickenpox.
- Hand washing before and after visiting can help prevent the spread of chickenpox.

Hand Washing Protocol



Hand Cleansing with Water:

- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply soap and rub together for at least 15 seconds, washing well between the fingers and around nails.
- Rinse well with warm running water.
- Dry with hand towel or paper towel.
- Turn the tap off using paper towel or hand towel (remember...your hands were dirty when you turned the tap on).
- Throw the paper towel in the trash. If you are using a hand towel, do not share it with other people and wash it often.



Hand Cleansing with Hand Sanitizer:

- Apply approximately 1 tsp. of sanitizer to your palm.
- Cover each area, rubbing vigorously and interlacing fingers.
- Rub for 10-15 seconds until hands are dry.
- Do not rinse off.