

CHICKENPOX (VARICELLA)

Chickenpox (Varicella) has been reported in the school. Chickenpox is a very contagious viral disease.

Chickenpox Disease

Chickenpox usually develops 2-3 weeks after coming into contact with someone who has it. Chickenpox is spread by coughing and sneezing. Because the virus is also in the fluid of the blisters, a person can get chickenpox by touching the fluid, then touching his or her mouth, nose or eyes.

If your child has chickenpox:

- ◆ Tell the school your child has chickenpox
- ◆ Keep your child home until:
 - ◆ All the sores have scabbed over or
 - ◆ 5 days from when the blisters appeared, whichever time is longer

Symptoms include:

- ◆ Cold-like symptoms
- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Very itchy rash
- ◆ Red pimple-like spots which turn into clear blisters that become cloudy, break open and crust over
- ◆ Spots which continue to appear for 1-5 days

Although uncommon, chickenpox can cause serious complications such as pneumonia or infection of the lungs, encephalitis or inflammation of the brain and bacterial skin infections such as Group A Streptococcus or “flesh eating disease” which can be life-threatening.

Pregnant women, who have never had or are unsure if they have had chickenpox, should avoid close contact with anyone who has chickenpox sores. Newborn infants and people who have weakened immune systems are more likely to have a severe case of chickenpox and develop problems. People with weakened immune systems, pregnant women and newborn infants who have been in contact with chickenpox disease, should consult with their doctor for advice.

Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine

There is a vaccine to protect against chickenpox. Chickenpox (Varicella) vaccine protection takes place about 2 weeks after the vaccination. If your child has never had chickenpox OR had chickenpox before age one and is in contact with a person who is sick with chickenpox, Varicella vaccine given within 3-5 days of exposure may help to prevent infection or reduce the severity of the infection.

Anyone who had chickenpox disease after one year of age, had shingles or the chickenpox vaccine, is protected and does not need the vaccine. Varicella vaccine is free for anyone, 1 year or older, who has not had shingles or the chickenpox vaccine.

For more information contact:

- ◆ Your local Health Unit
- ◆ HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 (a free call) or www.healthlinkbc.ca
- ◆ Your doctor

Health Units:

Esquimalt	250-360-5600	Salt Spring Island	250-538-4880
Outer Gulf Islands	250-539-3099	Sooke	250-642-5464
Peninsula	250-544-2400	Victoria	250-388-2200
Saanich	250-519-5100	West Shore	250-478-1757