

Chickenpox



Symptoms appear 1 to 3 weeks after being infected.

Infectious period: The most infectious time is 1 to 2 days before the rash appears, but it continues to be infectious until all the blisters have crusted over.

Chickenpox is a mild infectious disease that most children catch at some time. It starts with feeling unwell, a rash and, usually, a fever.

Spots develop, which are red and become fluid-filled blisters within a day or two. They eventually dry into scabs, which drop off.

The spots first appear on the chest, back, head or neck, then spread. They don't leave scars unless they're badly infected or picked.

Your child can return to school/nursery, once all spots have crusted over and your child is fit and well and showing no other symptoms.

What to do

You don't need to go to your GP or accident and emergency (A&E) department unless you're unsure whether it's chickenpox or your child's very unwell or distressed.

- Give your child plenty to drink.
- Use the recommended dose of paracetamol to relieve any fever or discomfort.
- Ibuprofen isn't recommended for children who have chickenpox as, in rare cases, it can cause skin complications.
- Taking baths, wearing loose, comfortable clothes and using calamine lotion may help ease the itchiness.
- Try to discourage or distract your child from scratching, as this will increase the risk of scarring. Keeping their nails short will help.
- Let your child's school or nursery know they're ill in case other children are at risk.

Keep your child away from anyone who's pregnant or trying to get pregnant.

If your child had contact with a pregnant woman just before they became unwell, let the woman know about the chickenpox and suggest that she sees her GP or midwife.

For women who have never had chickenpox, catching the illness in pregnancy can cause miscarriage, or the baby may be born with chickenpox.