

Chickenpox (Varicella Zoster virus)

What is Chickenpox?

Varicella is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella zoster virus. It is commonly referred to as Chickenpox.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms can appear from 10-21 days after exposure usually occurring between 14-16 days and include:

- Rash & itchy blisters
- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Loss of appetite

The rash usually develops on the chest and stomach before spreading to the face, arms and legs.

Illness usually lasts 5-10 days

If you have symptoms, call your healthcare provider.

Transmission (How it spreads)

- Touching or breathing in the virus particles
- From direct contact with person with current shingles infection

Diagnosis and Treatment

A doctor's examination is normally enough to diagnose illness. If necessary, a scraping or swab of blisters may be taken

There is no specific treatment available, but most cases are treated with bed rest, fluids and control of fever.

Prevention:

Vaccination; the recommendations are as follows:

- An initial dose of vaccine is recommended at 12-18 months of age, with a second dose at age 4-6 years
- Everyone 13 and older, who has never had the disease should receive two doses 4-8 weeks apart
- Persons of any age who have never been vaccinated should be vaccinated within 3-5 days of exposure with an infected person

Other means of prevention include:

- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Practice good hand hygiene
- Stay away from others until the blisters are dry and crusted

Who is at Risk?

Anyone who has had chickenpox in the past; immunocompromised and elderly persons are at an elevated risk compared to other age groups and those who are not immunocompromised.

If those exposed are not age appropriately vaccinated within 72 hours of exposure, local health officials may exclude those exposed for 21 days from working in an adult care home, correctional facility, or healthcare facility, and attending or working in a school, childcare facility or adult care center.

If you have symptoms, call your healthcare provider

Report cases to the Riley County Health Department by calling the Disease Investigation
Line: 785-317-0474

Varicella is a reportable disease in the state of Kansas. All cases must be reported to KDHE
via the Epi Hotline: 877-427-7317