

Chickenpox infection

Paediatric
department

01935 475 122
yeovilhospital.nhs.uk

The logo for Yeovil Hospital Healthcare, featuring a stylized 'Y' inside a circle with a rainbow-colored border.
Yeovil Hospital
Healthcare

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is an infection caused by the Varicella Zoster virus.

It most commonly affects children (especially young children under ten years of age) but adults and older children can be affected too.

The time from exposure to developing symptoms is one to three weeks. The most infectious period is from one to two days before the rash appears but your child will continue to be infectious until all the spots have crusted over (usually about five to seven days after the first spots appear).

How will my child be affected?

- Chickenpox may begin with cold-like symptoms followed by a high temperature.
- An itchy, sometimes painful, rash initially appears as red spots and then turn into watery 'blister-like' spots which occur in 'crops' over several days. The rash is usually worse on the body and face, but can affect the scalp, hands, feet, eyes and mouth. They then burst and form scabs.
- Fever, headache, general malaise.
- Muscle aches.

How is it passed on?

Chickenpox is highly infectious and is easily passed to someone by direct contact with:

- secretions of the nose and throat spread by coughing, sneezing or through face to face conversation.
- the liquid from the rash of chickenpox or shingles.
- items contaminated by these secretions, for example; surfaces, toys, towels and bed linen.

Can my child go to school?

Keep your child off school for five days after the onset of the rash or until the last blister has scabbed over.

Keep away from newborn babies, pregnant women, and people with weak immunity.

Are there any special risks?

Chickenpox can affect the developing baby of a pregnant woman without natural immunity especially in early and late stages of pregnancy.

Pregnant mothers in contact with chickenpox should discuss this with the GP or midwife.

Does my child need any treatment?

- No antibiotic is needed to treat chickenpox except if the rash becomes infected. The illness gets better without any medication.
- If the rash is itchy it can be treated with calamine lotion, moisturising cream, cooling gel or antihistamines.
- Give infant paracetamol such as Calpol for pain relief. Do not give ibuprofen (such as Calprofen) if your child has chickenpox, as it can sometime increase the risk of skin complications
- Offer plenty of fluids to your child, little and often, to keep them well hydrated.
- Tap or pat the skin rather than scratching it - to avoid it leading to further problems of scarring or infection.
- If your child is not drinking enough, has spots in their eyes, develops a bad cough or you are worried, take them to your GP.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Paediatric Assessment Unit (PAU)

(9am-9pm):

01935 384 788

Children's Ward

(9pm-9am):

01935 384 360

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in another format, eg.
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member of staff.**

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**Ref: 10-16-109
Review: 11/18**