

# Chicken pox



Children should be immunised to stop them getting chicken pox. Talk to your doctor or public health nurse about immunisation.

A child may have a fever and a headache. Spots will appear with a blister on top of each spot. Blisters pop and get a scab or crust. The blisters are usually on the stomach, back and face, and then spread to other parts of the body. Blisters can also be inside the mouth and on the head.

## What to do

- Make sure your child drinks lots of fluid. Water is best.
- Try and stop your child from scratching their skin. You could use calamine lotion or a cool bath to help the chicken box become less itchy.
- Keep your child's nails short and clean.
- Check other children for chicken pox.

## How is chickenpox spread?

Coughing and sneezing.  
Contact with fluid from blisters.

## What to do if the chicken pox gets worse

Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- spots get redder, warm or painful
- your child gets a fever, cough, diarrhoea (you say, dy-a-ree-a) or starts vomiting. These things can cause dehydration (where your child is getting rid of more fluid than they have from drinking water).

Your child may need blood tests and antibiotics.



It is important for your child to take the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the chicken pox seems to have cleared up. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

### Time off from kura or school

One week after the rash starts, or check with your doctor or public health nurse.

### Notes:

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## Chickenpox vaccine

Chickenpox (varicella) is a common virus that causes an itchy skin rash and blisters. It is usually mild, but can lead to skin infections and more serious complications such as blood infections, pneumonia, inflammation of the brain, and eye and kidney problems. Without vaccination nearly all children will get chickenpox between the ages of 2 and 10 years old. Teenagers and adults are more likely to develop complications than children. Chickenpox is serious for pregnant women because it can cause damage to unborn babies.

One dose of chickenpox vaccine is given free at age 15 months. Children turning 11 years of age who have not previously been infected with or vaccinated against chickenpox are also eligible for a free dose.

### How effective is the chickenpox vaccine?

One dose of the vaccine will protect around four out of five people from any kind of chickenpox and almost everyone from severe chickenpox.

Some people who have been vaccinated will still get chickenpox, but they will have a milder illness.

### Possible reactions to the chickenpox vaccine

Most children will not feel any effects from the immunisation, but some may experience mild reactions such as fever and injection site tenderness, similar to other childhood vaccines. About one in twenty children develop a mild rash between 5 and 26 days after immunisation. In rare cases, this can be contagious - keep any blisters covered and stay away from anyone at risk of severe disease, such as people with weakened immune systems, babies or pregnant women.

See page 26 for advice on what to do if your baby has a reaction.

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**If you are worried about your baby's reaction to an immunisation, talk to your doctor or nurse or call the free Healthline service on 0800 611 116 anytime day or night.**