

Further information

If you need any more information or advice please contact: 111.

Call 111 if you need medical help fast, but it's not life-threatening – for example, if you:

- Think you need to go to the hospital.
- Don't know who to call for medical help.
- Don't have a GP to call.
- Need medical advice or reassurance about what to do next.



when it's less urgent than 999

For health needs that are urgent, you should call your GP. If a health professional has given you a number to call for a particular condition, you should continue to use that number.

This information has been produced by the Emergency Department.

Support our Emergency Department


Birmingham
Children's Hospital
Charity
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With up to 200 children coming to our Emergency Department every day, with everything from broken toes to severe road traffic injuries, there can be a bit of a wait. With your help, we can continue to provide books, toys and activity packs to keep children occupied and distracted during any waits and throughout their treatment journey.



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NHS

**Birmingham Women's
and Children's**
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice Sheet for

Chickenpox

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By your side

Information for Parents:

Chickenpox

Chickenpox is a highly infectious disease caused by the varicella zoster virus. It occurs most commonly in children, and is spread by sneezing and coughing.

After infection by the virus it takes 10-21 days for the illness to develop – this is what's called the incubation period.

People with chickenpox are infectious from two days before the rash appears until the time scabs have formed on the last of the sores, which is usually around seven days after the rash first appeared.

Children should be kept at home until the last crop of sores has formed scabs.

Symptoms of chickenpox

The first symptoms of chickenpox may be similar to a cold and include fever, mild headache, tiredness, sore throat and loss of appetite.

These are quickly followed by an itchy, red and pimply rash, which soon develops into a clear, fluid-filled, blister-like sores. The rash can appear anywhere on the body, but usually starts on the face or scalp, then spreads to the trunk and limbs. The sores can also spread into the mouth and nose.

The sores usually dry up and form scabs after about three or four days. Some children will develop only a few sores but others may have hundreds. The sores may appear in crops over a period of days.

Complications from chickenpox

Chickenpox is usually a mild illness in children, but can be more severe in adults and adolescents, and is particularly serious for pregnant women because of possible effects on the unborn baby, newborn babies and people with weakened immune systems.

Try to keep your child away from these people while the chickenpox is infectious.

People usually only have chickenpox once in their life but the virus can lie dormant in the body for many years afterwards. It can be reactivated much later in life and cause shingles. Chickenpox can be caught from people with shingles, but shingles cannot be caught from someone with chickenpox.

Vaccination against chickenpox is not currently part of the immunisation programme for children against common infectious diseases.

The spots do not usually scar unless they are badly scratched.

An ear infection develops in about 1 in 20 cases.

Pneumonia and inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) are rare complications.

When to see a medical professional

- If your child develops a very high fever, becomes drowsy or develops a severe headache
- If your child develops difficulty in breathing
- If your child has a severe earache
- If the person affected is pregnant.
- If the person affected has an illness affecting their immune system or is taking medications that can affect the immune system, such as steroids.
- If the skin around the sores becomes very red and warm or there is pus present – sometimes bacteria can get into the sores and cause an infection.

Treatment tips

Key treatment tips for chickenpox

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids and have plenty of rest.
- Give paracetamol to reduce fever and ease any pain, follow instructions on the packaging.
- Avoid scratching as much as possible – cut nails extra short and keep hands and fingernails clean to reduce the chance of skin becoming infected.
- Try using an anti-itch medicine (anti-histamine) if itching is a problem
- Wear loose-fitting clothes
- Antiviral tablets may be prescribed for adults or for severe cases of chickenpox.

Data Protection - Looking after and sharing information about your child

We have a duty of care to help patients and families understand how information about them is kept and shared and we include the following information in all our patient leaflets:

Information is collected about your child relevant to their diagnosis, treatment and care. We store it in written records and electronically on computer. As a necessary part of that care and treatment we may have to share some of your information with other people and organisations who are either responsible or directly involved in your child's care. This may involve taking your child's information off site. We may also have to share some of your information for other purposes; such as research etc. Any information that is shared in this way will not identify your child unless we have your consent. If you have any questions and/or do not want us to share that information with others, please talk to the people looking after your child or contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) on 0121 333 8403.