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Dear BCIS Parents,

The following is the information about chicken pox, to include symptoms, transmission, possible complications, and treatment. A picture of a typical case of chickenpox is at the end of the summary. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact the Health Centre at 8771 7171 ext. 1010.

If you think your child may have chicken pox, please have them stay at home, notifying the school, and schedule an appointment with your physician. Thank you.

School Nurse  
BCIS Health Centre  
Tel: 8610-87717171 ext. 1010  
[nurse@bcis.cn](mailto:nurse@bcis.cn)

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## Chicken Pox (Varicella)

A disease caused by infection with the varicella zoster virus, which causes fever and an itchy rash. Chicken pox is a viral infection that is becoming less common because most children now receive the chicken pox vaccine.

Children who still get chicken pox typically develop symptoms about 10 to 21 days after being exposed to someone with chicken pox (the incubation period) or shingles (herpes zoster).

### Symptoms:

Usually no symptoms before the rash appears, but occasionally there is fatigue, headache, lack of appetite, mild abdominal pain, and mild fever 24 – 48 hours before the rash appears;

the rash typically appears first on a child's trunk, scalp, and face and consists of small, **very itchy**, flat red spots, which then become raised and resemble pimples. The spots then develop into small blisters (raised fluid filled vesicles), often described as looking like a 'dewdrop'. The tops are very easily scratched off. As the blisters/vesicles break, the sores form a crust;

the fever only lasts about 2 to 4 days;

new 'crops' of the rash appear on the child's trunk and then arms and legs continue for about 4 days;

all of the lesions are crusted over about 6 to 7 days after the illness began;

the crusts then fall off in another 7 days, although it sometimes takes up to 20 days, usually without scarring;

the fever usually subsides after most of the sores have formed crusts.

### Transmission:

Chicken pox may be spread 24 hours before the rash appears and up to about 6 days after.

Spread by coughing and sneezing (highly contagious), by direct contact, and by aerosolization of virus from skin lesions.

### **Complications:**

Complications from chicken pox are rare and the disease can be treated at home. More serious symptoms that might indicate a complication of chicken pox has developed include redness around the base of skin lesions (bacterial infection), a cough and difficulty breathing/rapid breathing (pneumonia), or any neurological symptoms, such as slurred speech, severe headache, vomiting, seizures, or trouble walking (viral encephalitis).

### **Treatment:**

**If you suspect your child has chicken pox, please keep your child home and notify the school. Then call your doctor and make an appointment to confirm chicken pox (try to keep your child separate from other children). Some doctors may try to treat chicken pox over the phone because it is so contagious.**

- Using cool wet compresses or giving baths in cool or lukewarm water every 3 to 4 hours for the first few days. Oatmeal baths can help to relieve itching. (Baths do not spread chickenpox.)
- Patting (not rubbing) the body dry.
- Putting calamine lotion on itchy areas (but don't use it on the face, especially near the eyes).
- Giving your child foods that are cold, soft, and bland because chickenpox in the mouth may make drinking or eating difficult. Avoid feeding your child anything highly acidic or especially salty, like orange juice or pretzels.
- Asking your doctor or pharmacist about pain-relieving creams to apply to sores in the genital area.
- Giving your child acetaminophen regularly to help relieve pain if your child has mouth blisters.
- Asking the doctor about using over-the-counter medication for itching.

Your physician can recommend any further treatment.

### **Chicken Pox Facts:**

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The average child with chicken pox gets about 300 lesions.

More than 90% of brothers and sisters catch it! It is very typical or characteristic for children with chicken pox to have lesions in different stages at the same time, including the first flat red spots, the fluid filled vesicles, and the crusted vesicles.

The fever with chicken pox usually ranges from 37.8-38.8 degrees Celcius/100 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit, but may be as high as 41.1 degrees Celcius/106 degrees Fahrenheit in some cases.

Chicken pox crusts that are scratched off or infected may lead to scars.

Children who have chicken pox after having the chicken pox vaccine often have an atypical case, with much milder symptoms and fewer lesions.

References:

Centers for Disease Control Website

Pantell: Taking Care of Your Child, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Copyright 1999 Perseus Books Group.

Behrman: Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics, 17th ed., Copyright 2004 Saunders, An Imprint of Elsevier

Habif: Clinical Dermatology, 4th ed., Copyright 2004 Mosby, Inc.

Gershon: Krugman's Infectious Diseases of Children, 11th ed., Copyright 2004 Mosby, Inc.

## Chickenpox Picture

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Picture of a child with chickenpox:



This picture shows the classic rash that is associated with a [chickenpox](#) infection, including red papules (bumps), vesicles (the spots that look like little blisters), which then become crusted scabs. It is very common to see all of the different stages of the chickenpox rash at the same time. Chickenpox typically starts on a child's trunk and then spreads to the rest of their body, including their arms, legs, and head.