

Chickenpox (Varicella zoster)

Communicable Disease Exposure Notice

Dear Parents:

Your child may have been exposed to the communicable disease **Chickenpox (Varicella zoster)** in a Reach Dane/Reach Green classroom on the following date_____.

Please review the information below. If you have any questions, or if you child begins experiencing symptoms of the illness, contact your child's primary care provider or one of the agencies listed below.

Public Health – Madison & Dane County

(608) 266-4821

Green County Health Department

(608) 328-9390

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a very contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus.

What are the symptoms of chickenpox?

The classic symptom of chickenpox is a rash that quickly turns into itchy, fluid-filled blisters that eventually turn into scabs. The rash may first show up on the face, chest, and back then spread to the rest of the body, including inside the mouth, eyelids, or genital area. It usually takes about one week for all the blisters to become scabs. Other symptoms that may begin to appear 1-2 days before the rash include: high fever, tiredness, loss of appetite and headache.

How does a person get chickenpox?

The virus spreads in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also be spread by touching or breathing in the virus particles that come from chickenpox blisters. The virus spreads easily from infected persons to others who have never had the disease or received the chickenpox vaccine.

Chickenpox can also be spread from people with shingles. Varicella-zoster virus also causes shingles. A person with shingles can spread the virus to others who have never had chickenpox or received the chickenpox vaccine.

How long does it take to develop chickenpox following exposure?

Symptoms usually begin 10 to 21 days after contact with an infected person

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How is chickenpox treated?

Your health care provider can advise you on treatment options. Antiviral medications are recommended for people with chickenpox who are more likely to develop serious disease including: otherwise healthy people older than 12 years of age; people with chronic skin or lung disease; people receiving steroid therapy; some groups of pregnant women. For persons at risk of serious complications should call their health care provider.

Symptomatic treatment of chickenpox includes medications to reduce itching and prevent scratching, to decrease the risk of infection and scarring of the chickenpox blisters. Fever in children should be treated only with acetaminophen (**not** aspirin products) in order to prevent Reye syndrome, a very serious illness sometimes associated with chickenpox.

How long is a child with chickenpox excluded from childcare?

Children are excluded until all chickenpox blisters become dry and crusted over.

How can I limit the spread of chickenpox?

Persons with chickenpox symptoms should seek prompt medical care. The best method to prevent further spread of chickenpox is for people infected with the disease to remain home and avoid exposing others who are susceptible.

How can chickenpox be prevented?

The best way to prevent chickenpox is to get the chickenpox vaccine. Children, adolescents, and adults should have two doses of chickenpox vaccine. Chickenpox vaccine is very safe and effective at preventing the disease. Most people who get the vaccine will not get chickenpox. If a vaccinated person does get chickenpox, it is usually mild—with fewer blisters and mild or no fever. The chickenpox vaccine prevents almost all cases of severe disease.