

Chickenpox is a benign, highly contagious disease caused by a virus (the varicella-zoster viruses). The incubation period is 2-3 weeks.

INFORMATION ABOUT CHICKENPOX:

- 1. Symptoms** may include itchy small bumps on the skin, malaise (not feeling well), fever, sore throat and headache.
- 2. Signs and Diagnosis:** The diagnosis is based on the pattern of the rash (“crops” of itchy red bumps becoming blisters, then scabs), the location and progression of the rash (i.e., more lesions on the trunk than elsewhere, all stages of skin lesions present simultaneously, bumps on the scalp, possibly small white ulcers in the mouth) and the general clinical picture.
- 3. Lab work** is usually not needed. Your clinician will tell you if it is necessary in your case.
- 4. Contagion:** The period of communicability starts a day or two before the onset of symptoms and lasts until there is a scab on every lesion (it usually takes 5-7 days after the rash begins for a scab to form on every lesion). The virus is spread by respiratory droplets and direct contact with the infected person.
- 5. Duration and Severity:** The illness usually lasts about a week (ranges from a few days to two weeks). The illness is usually mild but severe cases do occur. Complications such as pneumonia, encephalitis, and bacterial superinfection are unusual in our college population but do occasionally occur.
- 6. Treatment:** Your clinician will formulate a treatment plan for you which will help you with your most prominent symptoms.

Occasionally, an expensive anti-viral oral medicine may be used.

You will be asked to stay out of class and other public places until your period of contagion is finished (i.e., until there is a scab on every skin bump).

- 7. Immunity:** An infection with chickenpox usually confers a solid, lasting immunity. Occasionally, patients will develop Herpes Zoster (“Shingles”) at a future time, however.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

