

Chickenpox in the Community

CHICKENPOX/VARICELLA FACTS

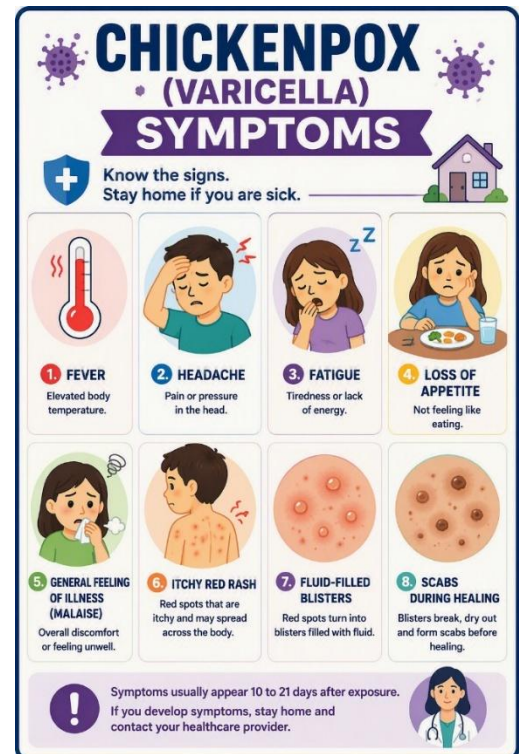
- Current information from Public Health can be found [here](#).
- The chickenpox/varicella-zoster virus (VZV) is a highly contagious communicable disease, spreads by airborne route, or direct contact with fluid in the lesions of infected persons.
- **Contracting chickenpox as an adult is significantly more severe, painful and dangerous.** Recovery duration is generally longer in adults.
- Chickenpox is communicable **one to two days before onset of rash** and approximately **three to four days after the appearance of rash**, until all the vesicles are crusted over.
- Symptoms appear 10-21 days after infection and last about 2 weeks.
- Chickenpox can cause serious health complications including secondary bacterial skin infections, dehydration, pneumonia, encephalitis, toxic shock syndrome or Reye's syndrome.
- People most at risk include newborns, adults (non-immune), pregnant people (non-immune), immunocompromised individuals.
- Chickenpox infections during pregnancy pose serious health risks to the pregnant person and their baby.
- Significant exposures include:
 - Continuous household contact
 - Being indoors for more than 1hr. with infectious person
 - 15 minutes face-to-face with infectious person
 - Touching the lesions or articles freshly soiled by vesicle discharge of a person with active infection



CHICKENPOX SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may vary from person to person, appearing 10-21 days after exposure to the virus and can include:

- Fever
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Runny nose
- General feeling of unwellness (malaise)
- Eruption of skin lesions on all areas of the body, including on the scalp, mucous membranes of the mouth and upper respiratory tract
- Fluid-filled lesions or vesicles occur in "crops", so that several stages of old and new lesions will be present at the same time.
- **If you have symptoms, call 811 or the [Public Health Office](#) prior to going to a health care facility**



HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- If you are sick, stay home from work or class to prevent the spread of chickenpox and other contagious illnesses. Avoid close contact with other people and contact public health, a healthcare professional, or [HealthLine](#) at 811 for more information.
- [Wash your hands](#) with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Get your Measles/Mumps/Rubella/Varicella (MMRV) vaccination. Vaccines can save lives by protecting you (if exposed to the virus), prevent you from becoming extremely ill, and protecting people close to you who are at a higher risk of measles complications.



CHICKENPOX VACCINE INFORMATION

There is **NO** proven link between the MMRV vaccine and autism

1. The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) recommends vaccination for:
 - i) **Infants** (under 12 months of age) - Contact child's health care provider
 - ii) **12 months to adults** - 2 doses of MMRV vaccine if there is no evidence of immunity (through blood testing or history of lab-confirmed measles)
2. If you are fully vaccinated or have had a lab-confirmed measles test, a booster vaccine is not recommended but verify with your health care professional or with the [Public Health Office](#).
3. If you were immunized in Saskatchewan, immunization records can be found on the [MySaskHealthRecord](#).

SHINGLES

Shingles is caused by the chickenpox/varicella-zoster virus, which stays in your body for life. Years later, the virus may reactivate as shingles. A person with an active shingles infection can pass the varicella-zoster virus to anyone who isn't immune to chickenpox.



Getting the chickenpox vaccination is the most safe and effective way to protect yourself against chickenpox, chickenpox-related complications, and shingles!

Resources:

[Varicella \(Chickenpox\) - Canada.ca](#)
[Chickenpox - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)
[Varicella \(chickenpox\) vaccines: Canadian Immunization Guide - Canada.ca](#)
<https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/129322/formats/155628/download>
[Shingles - Symptoms & causes - Mayo Clinic](#)
[Pathogen Safety Data Sheets: Infectious Substances – Varicella-zoster virus - Canada.ca](#)