



Gila County  
Health & Emergency Management

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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## Chickenpox Fact Sheet

### Background

Chickenpox is a very contagious illness caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It is most common in young children, but older children and adults who are not immune can also become infected.

### Symptoms

Symptoms develop 10 to 21 days after exposure and last for 5 to 10 days. Common symptoms of chickenpox are a blister-rash, itching, tiredness, and fever. Persons with chickenpox can get 250 to 500 blisters on their body.



### Transmission

Chickenpox is highly contagious. It spreads mainly through direct contact with blisters or through the air when infected people cough or sneeze. Infected persons are contagious up to 5 days before the rash appears, and remain contagious until after the rash completely crusts over. Persons who have been vaccinated may develop a mild illness called breakthrough chickenpox. More severe illness occurs in unvaccinated individuals.

### Treatment

Most persons with chickenpox will recover in about a week without specific medical treatment. Tylenol and ibuprofen may be helpful for fever and pain. Never give anyone with chickenpox aspirin, as this can cause a severe illness called Reye's syndrome. Infants, the elderly, persons with weakened immune systems, and

pregnant women are at higher risk for complications from chickenpox. Complications include scarring, bacterial skin infections, and pneumonia. Some antiviral drugs are available, and are most effective when started within 24 hours after the rash appears.

To protect other patients, if you suspect that you have chickenpox, call before going to a medical facility.

### Prevention

- Vaccination is the best prevention
- Children should get 1 dose of chickenpox vaccine between 12 and 18 months of age and a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose between 4 and 6 years of age
- Children over 13 years and adults who have not had chickenpox should get 2 doses of chickenpox vaccine 4-6 weeks apart
- Persons with chickenpox should stay home for at least 5 days after the rash appears
- Consult your doctor if you come into contact with someone who has chickenpox



### For more information

If you need more information, please contact your primary care physician or Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Management at (928) 402-8811.