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Chickenpox

Also called: Varicella

Chickenpox is an infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus. Most cases are in children under age 15, but older children and adults can get it. It spreads very easily from one person to another.

The classic symptom of chickenpox is an uncomfortable, itchy rash. The rash turns into fluid-filled blisters and eventually into scabs. It usually shows up on the face, chest, and back and then spreads to the rest of the body. Other symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite

Chickenpox is usually mild and lasts 5 to 10 days. Calamine lotions and oatmeal baths can help with itching. Acetaminophen can treat the fever. Do not use aspirin for chickenpox; that combination can cause **Reye syndrome** [<https://medlineplus.gov/reyesyndrome.html>].

Chickenpox can sometimes cause serious problems. Adults, babies, teenagers, pregnant women, and those with weak immune systems tend to get sicker from it. They may need to take antiviral medicines.

Once you catch chickenpox, the virus usually stays in your body. You probably will not get chickenpox again, but the virus can cause **shingles** [<https://medlineplus.gov/shingles.html>] in adults. A chickenpox vaccine can help prevent most cases of chickenpox, or make it less severe if you do get it.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Start Here

- About Chickenpox [<https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Chickenpox (Varicella) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/chicken-pox.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Chickenpox (Varicella) [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/varicella-chickenpox/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Chickenpox Vaccination: What Everyone Should Know [<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/varicella/public/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- How to Handle Chickenpox [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/chickenpox-sheet.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/chickenpox-sheet.html>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Antibody Serology Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/antibody-serology-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/pruebas-de-serologia-de-anticuerpos/>]

Chickenpox and Shingles Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/chickenpox-and-shingles-tests/>]

 (National Library of Medicine)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-varicela-y-culebrilla/>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Chickenpox Vaccination [<https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/vaccines/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Chickenpox Vaccine [<https://familydoctor.org/chickenpox-vaccine/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/vacuna-contra-la-varicela/?adfree=true>]
- MMRV Vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella): What You Need to Know
[<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/downloads/mmrv.pdf>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/spanish_mmrv.pdf]
- Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine: What You Need to Know [<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/downloads/varicella.pdf>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/spanish_varicella.pdf]

Treatments and Therapies

- How to Treat Chickenpox [<https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/treatment/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Related Issues

- Postherpetic Neuralgia [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/postherpetic-neuralgia/symptoms-causes/syc-20376588?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/postherpetic-neuralgia/symptoms-causes/syc-20376588?p=1>]
- Reye Syndrome [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/reye.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/reye.html>]

Specifics

- Chickenpox Symptoms and Complications [<https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/signs-symptoms/>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Images

- Photos of Chickenpox [<https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/signs-symptoms/photos.html>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Chickenpox [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Chickenpox%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]
 (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Real-world effectiveness of varicella vaccination in Guangzhou, China, 2017-2022: a matched...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40684305>]
- Article: Epidemiological characteristics of breakthrough varicella cases among students in Jiulongpo District,...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40630958>]
- Article: Immunogenicity and safety of the domestic and imported live-attenuated varicella vaccine...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40618017>]
- Chickenpox -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Chickenpox%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Chickenpox [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/chicken-pox.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/chicken-pox.html>]
- What Makes Chickenpox Itch? [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/chicken-pox-itch.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/chicken-pox-itch.html>]
- Your Child's Vaccines: Chickenpox Vaccine [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/varicella-vaccine.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/varicella-vaccine.html>]

Adults

- Why Vaccinate Adults Against Chickenpox [<https://www.nfid.org/resource/why-vaccinate-teens-adolescents-and-adults-against-chickenpox/>] (National Foundation for Infectious Diseases)

Patient Handouts

- Chickenpox [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001592.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001592.htm>]
- MMRV Vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella): What You Need to Know [<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/downloads/mmrv.pdf>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/spanish_mmrv.pdf]
- Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine: What You Need to Know [<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/downloads/varicella.pdf>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/spanish_varicella.pdf]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Chickenpox [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001592.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Childhood Vaccines [<https://medlineplus.gov/childhoodvaccines.html>]

Shingles [<https://medlineplus.gov/shingles.html>]

The primary NIH organization for research on *Chickenpox* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
[<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/chickenpox.html>] on *Chickenpox*

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