**Chickenpox Varicella**

**Description**
Chickenpox usually begins with a slight fever, headache, runny nose and cough. A day or two later a rash begins, starting as small pink blotches but rapidly progressing to blisters which usually last three to four days before drying out and turning into scabs. The chickenpox virus is spread through coughs and sneezes and through direct contact with the fluid in the blisters of the rash. The dry scabs are not infectious. Since shingles blisters also contain the virus, a person who has never had chickenpox can become infected with chickenpox from someone who has shingles. The usual time between contact with the virus and the development of the illness is about 14-16 days, although sometimes it can take longer. An individual with chickenpox is infectious to about one to two days before the onset of the rash and until the blisters have all scabbed, usually four to five days.

**Symptoms**
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**Treatment**
People with chickenpox should be excluded from childcare facilities, schools or work for at least five days after the rash first appears or until dry scabs have replaced all blisters. Any contacts with lowered immunity, such as those with leukaemia, should be immediately excluded and referred for specialist advice. Good hygiene practices, such as washing hands after blowing or wiping nose, after coughing and before preparing food or eating should be maintained. Varicella vaccine has been shown to be effective in preventing chickenpox if given within three days and possibly up to five days of contact with an infected person, with earlier administration being preferable. An injection of zoster immune globulin (ZIG) given within 96 hours of exposure to chickenpox provides immediate but temporary protection against chickenpox and may be recommended if exposure has occurred for individuals at high risk of severe disease or pregnant women who are not immune to chickenpox. ZIG is not recommended for otherwise healthy children or adults.