



## FACT SHEET – Chicken Pox

### Information for Parents and Schools

#### What is it?

Chickenpox is a very common infection in childhood. It is caused by the *Varicella-zoster* virus. It is most common in children and is usually mild. When adults get it, however, they can be very sick. Most adults have already had chickenpox and will not get it again. Chickenpox is also very dangerous for people with immune system problems, or for people who are taking steroids.

#### What are the symptoms?

Chickenpox begins with a fever, followed in a day or two by a rash that can be very itchy. The rash starts with red spots that soon turn into fluid-filled blisters. New blisters may form during the next few days, and after a few days, crusts form over the blisters.

#### How is it spread?

The chickenpox virus spreads very easily through the air or through direct contact with the fluid in a chickenpox blister. Chickenpox is infectious until the last blister is crusted over or five days after the rash first appears, whichever is shorter.

#### What is shingles?

Shingles (*zoster*) looks like chickenpox and is caused by the same virus but is found on only one part of the body. Shingles occurs in people who have already had chickenpox and is very infectious. It is possible to catch chickenpox from someone with shingles but you cannot get shingles from someone with chickenpox.

#### What can parents do?

Watch your child for signs of chickenpox during the next 2-3 weeks if another child has it. If your child develops chickenpox make sure you tell the school.

If your child gets chickenpox do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA). Taking aspirin increases the risk of *Reye's syndrome*. If you want to control your child's fever, it is safe to use acetaminophen (tylenol, tempra).

If your child has an immune disorder and has been exposed to chickenpox contact your physician. The physician can give that person a type of immune globulin which contains antibodies (protective substances) to help prevent infection.

If you are pregnant and have not had chickenpox, or if you have not lived in the same house with someone who has had chickenpox or shingles call your physician as soon as your child develops chickenpox. Your physician can give you a type of immune globulin to help prevent you from getting a severe infection. If you catch chickenpox early in your pregnancy, there is a very small chance of it damaging your unborn child.

#### When can a child return to school?

As with any illness, if the child cannot participate in regular activities or has a fever the child should remain at home. For mild cases, exclusion is not necessary.

#### Is there a vaccine?

Yes, Varivax II, the chickenpox vaccine, is available but it is currently **not publicly funded**. Contact your physician or the local public health unit for more information.

#### For More Information, call the Health Unit:

Department of Clinical Services

Brockville 345-5685

HEALTH Action Line 1-800-660-5853

Smiths Falls 283-2740

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## Thinking of Having a Garage Sale?

There are safety standards that are legislated in Canada for different products and especially for children's equipment. They are covered under the Hazardous Products Act. This is important information for you as you may be held liable for selling an item that no longer meets minimum safety standards. Some of the items covered in this Act include: cribs, cradles, playpens, toys, car seats, helmets, walkers, baby gates, and more.

### There are a few questions you may want to ask yourself before putting used childcare products out for sale.

- How old is it? If replacement parts are needed to meet current standards, they may no longer be available.
- Are the instructions with the item? How else will you know if there are any missing parts or if it is assembled incorrectly?
- Are there obvious signs of wear and tear?

It is great to help someone out by selling or giving away your children's equipment, but think safety first.

For more information, please call the Health Unit at 1 800 660 5853 or check out Health Canada's website at : [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ehp/ehd/catalogue/psb\\_pubs/garage\\_sales.htm](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ehp/ehd/catalogue/psb_pubs/garage_sales.htm)



Teachers are  
people too