

Chickenpox

Chickenpox is common and mostly affects children, although you can get it at any age. It usually gets better by itself within a week without needing to see a GP.

Check if it's chickenpox



1. Chickenpox starts with red spots. They can appear anywhere on the body.



2. The spots fill with fluid. The blisters may burst. They might spread or stay in a small area.



3. The spots scab over. More blisters might appear while others scab over.

Other symptoms

You might get symptoms before or after the spots, including:

- a high temperature above 38C
- aches and pains, and generally feeling unwell
- loss of appetite

Chickenpox is very itchy and can make children feel miserable, even if they don't have many spots. Chickenpox is usually much worse in adults.

It's possible to get chickenpox more than once, although it's unusual.

If you're not sure it's chickenpox

Check other [rashes in children](#).

Things you can do yourself

Important

You'll need to stay away from school, nursery or work until all the spots have crusted over. This is usually 5 days after the spots first appeared.

Do

- drink plenty of fluid (try ice lollies if your child isn't drinking) to avoid dehydration
- take [paracetamol](#) to help with pain and discomfort
- put socks on your child's hands at night to stop scratching
- cut your child's nails
- use cooling creams or gels from your pharmacy
- speak to your pharmacist about using antihistamine medicine to help itching
- bathe in cool water and pat the skin dry (don't rub)
- dress in loose clothes
- check with your airline if you're going on holiday – many airlines won't allow you to fly with chickenpox

Don't

- do not use [ibuprofen](#) unless advised to do so by your doctor, as it may cause serious skin infections
- do not give aspirin to children under 16
- do not be around pregnant women, newborn babies and people with a weakened immune system, as it can be dangerous for them

It's easy to catch chickenpox

You can catch chickenpox by being in the same room as someone with it.

It's also spread by touching clothes or bedding that has fluid from the blisters on it.

How long chickenpox is infectious for?

Chickenpox is infectious from 2 days before the spots appear to until they have crusted over, usually 5 days after they first appeared.

How soon you get symptoms after coming into contact with chickenpox

It takes 1 to 3 weeks from the time you were exposed to chickenpox for the spots to start appearing.

Chickenpox in pregnancy

It's rare to get chickenpox when you're pregnant, and the chance of it causing complications is low.

If you do get chickenpox when you're pregnant, there's a small risk of your baby being very ill when it's born.

Speak to your GP if you haven't had chickenpox and have been near someone with it.