

Dear Parents,

Greetings!

With temperatures soaring high due to early onset of summer this year, there are many reported cases of chickenpox, especially among the children. Lack of awareness about the illness and the vaccination for the same is said to be the major culprit.

Causes of Infection

Chickenpox is caused by 'varicella zoster', a viral illness characterized by a very itchy red rash. It is one of the most common infectious diseases of childhood. Children are usually affected by this till the age of 15 but is at peak 5 to 9 years of age. It spreads by the droplets from a sneeze or cough, or by coming into contact with the clothing, bed linens or oozing blisters of an infected person. The onset of symptoms takes about 10 to 21 days after exposure. The disease is most contagious a day or two before the rash appears and until the rash is completely dry and scabbed over.

Symptoms of Chickenpox

Chickenpox appears as a very itchy rash that spreads from the torso to the neck, face and limbs. People usually have a headache and aching muscles at that point. Lasting 7 to 10 days, the rash progresses from red bumps to fluid-filled blisters (vesicles) that drain and scab over. Vesicles may also appear in the mouth, on the scalp, around the eyes or on the genitals and can be very painful.

Precautions to Avoid Chickenpox

- **Vaccination:** The best way to prevent chickenpox is through vaccination. Everyone including children, adolescents and adults should get two shots of the chickenpox vaccine.
- **Immune System:** Boosting the body's immunity system is a rational approach to naturally prevent chickenpox. This can be done by following a good diet, quality sleep and ample water intake.
- **Avoid Contact:** Chickenpox is highly contagious as it is an air borne disease (coughing and sneezing), not only air borne, it can also spread by directly touching the blisters, it can survive for a short periods of time in mucus on various objects. Thus, avoiding to come in contact with people who are infected is the best approach to help prevent chickenpox. Isolate the infected person in a separate room and also try and consider to give a separate bathroom solely for the infected.
- **Personal Hygiene:** Keep yourself clean and dry at all times by having regular bath (morning and evening) and frequent hand wash using soap and water.
- **Disinfection at Home:** If there is an infected person at home disinfect the counter tops, tables, the arms of chairs, toys and other surfaces regularly which may have come in contact with the infected person. Several brands of home disinfectants are available in the market for the same.

*Stay Healthy, Stay Safe! *

Warm Regards,

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