



Scoil Náisiúnta Bhantiarna Lourdes

"Mol an óige 'is tiocfaidh sí"

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

There has been a case of Chickenpox in the school and your child may have been exposed. If your child has not had Chickenpox before it is quite likely that he/she will catch it.

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a common childhood illness. Fever and cold symptoms are often the first signs of illness and are followed by the appearance of the typical rash. The rash starts as small pink bumps, often around the neck, ears, back and stomach. These develop a little water blister which in turn becomes yellow and oozy and ultimately crusty as it dries. The rash spreads outwards to involve the whole body finally involving the lower arms and legs. People may have only a few spots or may be virtually covered with them. In children it is usually a relatively mild illness however occasionally complications develop. The incidence of complications is much higher in infected adults. Chickenpox can be a very severe illness in people with weakened immunity.

Why should I be concerned about Chickenpox?

Chickenpox can be a devastating infection in people with a seriously weakened immune system (e.g. patients with leukaemia or after organ transplantation). In adults, chickenpox is a much more significant illness than in children and there is a greater risk of complications developing. There is a medicine available (Acyclovir) which if taken early in the illness can shorten the illness. Chickenpox infection in women who are in the early stages of pregnancy can result in congenital abnormalities in the infant.

What should I do now?

If your child is normally healthy, Chickenpox is likely to be a relatively mild illness and no specific precautions are necessary. Symptoms usually develop 8 to 21 days after exposure. The infected person can spread infection for up to 3 days before the rash appears and until the last pox is crusted and dry. If your child has a weakened immune, please contact your doctor and let him/her know that the child may have been exposed. There is an antibody preparation (VZIG) that can be given to prevent illness, but it must be given within 72 hours of exposure, so contact your doctor promptly. Specific medicine to treat Chickenpox is usually only given if there is a significant risk of complications developing.

What should I do if I think my child has Chickenpox?

Contact your doctor and arrange for him/her to see the child and confirm the diagnosis. **Do not bring the child to the crowded surgery waiting room as this will just spread the infection further.** Do not use Aspirin or any products that contain aspirin to control fever if your child has chickenpox as this has been associated with the development of a rare but serious disease called Reye's syndrome.

Can my child stay in school?

Many children with Chickenpox are too sick to attend school and are more comfortable at home. **Children can spread the infection to others as long as there are any spots which are not crusted and dried.** Children with spots that are crusted and dried can safely attend school.

Thank you for giving this your attention. Your family doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer any further questions that you might have about chickenpox.

Le gach dea-ghuí,



(Principal)

(This information is taken from "Infection in School – A Manual for School Personnel" compiled by the Health Promotion Unit, HSE)