



VARICELLA

8. Can Varicella be prevented?

- A vaccine is available and needs to be given when the child is 12 to 15 months old. An additional dose at the age of 4 to 5 years gives almost 95% protection against chicken pox. Please consult your paediatrician for additional information.

9. Can Varicella recur?

- It is uncommon to get a recurrence in Varicella. Rarely, relapses can occur if the patient's immune status is very poor.

10. Can chickenpox be treated with traditional medicines or herbal applications?

- Chicken pox can be effectively prevented and treated.
- Stay away from traditional beliefs about the disease.

INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF DERMATOLOGISTS, VENEREOLOGISTS AND LEPROLOGISTS

- What is Varicella?
- How can one get Varicella?
- How does the infection spread?
- How does Varicella appear?
- What should one do if he/she gets Varicella?
- Are there tests to confirm the diagnosis of Varicella?
- What is the treatment for Varicella?
- Can Varicella be prevented?
- Can Varicella recur?
- Can chickenpox be treated with traditional medicines or herbal applications?

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1. What is Varicella?

- Varicella is also known as Chicken Pox. It is a viral infection caused by Varicella- Zoster virus.
- Varicella can occur at any age (more common in children) and is more frequently seen during seasonal change.



2. How can one get Varicella?

- Varicella is an infectious disease which is transmitted by nasal droplets during the act of sneezing or coughing.

3. How does the infection spread?

- Varicella is a highly contagious disease. Once a person is affected, the chances of his family members getting affected increase many fold.

4. How does Varicella appear?

- At the onset, there may be mild to moderate fever for two days.
- The skin rash starts as small red bumps, which may be slightly itchy. They may be few or all over the body. Later they become filled with transparent fluid and some may be filled with pus. This stage lasts for 4 to 5 days, after which the lesions dry to form scabs or crusts. A person is infectious till the crusts form.
- In people who have a poor immunity, the infection can be very severe, involving the liver, lungs and brain.



5. What should one do if he/she gets Varicella?

- Consult a physician /dermatologist since it can be easily diagnosed by the clinical appearance of the lesion.

6. Are there tests to confirm the diagnosis of Varicella?

- No laboratory tests are usually needed for diagnosis.
- Rarely, when the diagnosis is less certain, the doctor may scrape the skin tissue and examine them under a microscope to confirm the diagnosis.

7. What is the treatment for Varicella?

- Stay at home/hospital in isolation to prevent transmission.
- Take extra care if there is a pregnant woman in the house.
- Maintain proper hygiene to prevent secondary bacterial infection.
- There is no dietary restriction.
- There is no restriction to taking a bath.
- In mild illness with fever and minimal skin rash, symptomatic oral medication such as paracetamol as per the treating physician's advice and local application of soothing agents such as calamine may be sufficient.
- In widespread disease in adults and in order to shorten the episode, oral antivirals such as acyclovir are often administered. This needs to be started as soon as possible, preferably in the first 72 hours.
- In people with poor immunity (HIV, cancer) admission to a hospital for intravenous medication is required.