

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

Varicella (Chickenpox)

What is Varicella?

Varicella is an acute rash and fever illness caused by the Varicella zoster virus (VZV), also known as chickenpox.

What are the signs and symptoms of a Varicella infection?

The symptoms of chickenpox include high fever, runny nose and cough, severe itching, uncomfortable rash, dehydration, and headache.

How are Varicella infections spread?

Chickenpox is spread from person to person by direct contact or through the air from an infected person's cough or sneeze. A person can get infected by touching open blisters or items that have been in contact with an infected person.

What is the incubation period of Varicella and how long is it contagious?

The incubation period is usually 14 to 16 days and can be as short as 10 days or long as 21 days. It is most communicable while rash is spreading and oozing, usually for 1 to 2 days before to shortly after onset of the rash. Contagiousness persists until crusting of all lesions has occurred and no new blisters are forming.

What should I do if I think I have a Varicella infection?

Persons who have these symptoms should see their physicians. Children, caregivers and teachers **cannot** be in school/daycare until symptoms are gone and all lesions have crusted over. This is a reportable disease and should be reported to the Health Department.

How can I prevent myself and others from getting a Varicella infection?

Chickenpox can be prevented by vaccination. Children should be vaccinated at an early age. Preventive measures include covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, blowing the nose into a tissue, discarding the tissue into the trash, and washing hands. Persons should wash hands after touching infectious lesions. Good surface sanitation and room ventilation are important control measures.

For more information, please contact the Florida Department of Health in Orange County Epidemiology Program at 407-858-1420. You may also visit the Epidemiology Program website, <http://orange.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/infectious-disease-services/epidemiology/index.html>, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, <http://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/index.html>, or the OCHD School Health website at <http://orange.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/clinical-and-nutrition-services/school-health/index.html> for additional information.

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