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**SUBJECT:** Chickenpox  
**Date Issued:** September 25, 2017 **Pages:** 2  
**To:** Parents and Staff  
**From:** Control of Infectious Diseases Team, Public Health

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*There have been two suspect cases of chickenpox reported at Credit Meadows Elementary School.*

## **What is chickenpox?**

Chickenpox is a disease caused by a virus. It is most common in children and is usually mild; however, when adults get it, they can be very sick.

Most adults and children who have had chickenpox will not get it again. They are immune (protected from the disease). Chickenpox can be a serious illness for newborns, pregnant women, people with immune system problems (like leukemia), people on chemotherapy, or anyone taking steroids. Chickenpox vaccine may be recommended by your physician to prevent or reduce the severity of illness.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of chickenpox?**

- Chickenpox begins with a fever.
- A day or two later, a rash appears that can be very itchy.
- The rash starts with red spots that soon turn into fluid-filled blisters. New blisters may form during the next few days.
- After a few days, crusts form over the blisters.
- Symptoms usually appear 14 to 16 days after contact with an infected person, although symptoms may appear anywhere from 10 to 21 days.

## **How does chickenpox spread?**

Chickenpox is very contagious (spreads easily from one person to another). It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. The virus can also be spread by direct contact with the fluid in the chickenpox blister or by touching objects that have been touched by the chickenpox blister. A person diagnosed with chickenpox is contagious 1 to 2 days before the rash appears and until the lesions have crusted over.

## What can parents do?

- Get your child vaccinated against chicken pox. Two doses of vaccine are recommended, usually given at 15 months and 4 to 6 years of age. It can prevent the disease or keep your child from getting very sick. Call your doctor or Public Health to get information about the shot if your child has not received two doses of chicken pox vaccine.
- Watch for signs and symptoms of chickenpox infection. If your child has symptoms of chickenpox, call your family doctor.
- **Do not give aspirin [acetylsalicylic acid (ASA)] or any product that contains aspirin.** Taking aspirin increases the risk of getting Reye's syndrome. Reye's syndrome can damage the liver and brain. Talk to your pharmacist.
- If anyone in your household has had chemotherapy or has an immune system problem, call your family doctor. You may be able to get a special type of immune globulin that can help prevent infection.
- If you are pregnant, have not had chickenpox, and are exposed to a person with the disease, call your family doctor as soon as possible. If your child gets chickenpox, you may be able to get a special type of immune globulin to help stop you from getting a severe infection.

## What are some ways to prevent other types of illness?

- Good hand washing is the best way to stop the spread of disease. Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol handrub. This is most important before you prepare and eat food, and after you cough, sneeze, wipe a nose, or use the washroom. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Do not share food, drinks, toothbrushes, musical instruments with mouthpieces, or eating utensils. Sports teams should not share water bottles or mouthguards
- If you have symptoms of illness avoid direct saliva contact with others (e.g., kissing).

## When can my child return to school?

The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends that a child with mild chickenpox be allowed to return to school regardless of their rash **and** if the child feels well enough to take part in all normal activities.

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### For more information, refer to contact or website:

**Call:** Control of Infectious Diseases Reporting Line

**Contact:** 519-822-2715 or 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4752 / [www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca](http://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca)