

Chickenpox & measles

Take rashes seriously

Chickenpox

Chickenpox is a mild and common childhood illness. It causes a rash of red, itchy spots that turn into fluid-filled blisters, which crust over to form scabs, and eventually drop off. Some children have only a few spots, while others can have spots covering their entire body. These are most likely to appear on the face, ears and scalp, under the arms, on the chest, tummy and on the arms and legs.

Chickenpox is caused by a virus. It is infectious from one to two days before the rash starts, until all the blisters have crusted over (five to six days after the start of the rash). To prevent spreading the infection, keep children away from nursery/school until all their spots have crusted over.

Your child will probably feel pretty miserable and irritable while they have it. They may have a fever for the first few days and the spots can be incredibly itchy.

Paracetamol (**sugar-free**) can help relieve fever and calamine lotion or cooling gels help ease itching.

Chickenpox usually gets better on its own. However, some children can become more seriously ill and need to see a doctor.

Contact your GP straight away if:

- Blisters become infected.
- Your child has chest pain or difficulty breathing.

Measles

Measles is a very infectious, viral illness which, in rare cases, can be fatal. One in five children with measles experience complications such as ear infections, diarrhoea and vomiting, pneumonia, meningitis and eye disorders. There is no treatment for measles. Vaccination is the only way of preventing it, so make sure your child has their MMR vaccination. Speak to your health visitor.

Symptoms develop around 10 days after you are infected and can include:

- Cold-like symptoms.
- Red eyes and sensitivity to light.
- A fever.
- Greyish white spots in the mouth and throat.

After a few days, a red-brown spotty rash appears. Starting behind the ears, it then spreads around the head and neck before spreading to the rest of the body. If there are no complications, symptoms usually disappear within 7-10 days.

Contact your GP if you suspect you or your child may have measles.

- Help to make your child comfortable:
Close the curtains/dim lights to help reduce light sensitivity.
- Use damp cotton wool to clean eyes.
- Give sugar-free paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- Ensure they drink lots.

Painkillers

If your child is in pain or has a high temperature (fever), you can give them a mild painkiller, such as **sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen (available over-the-counter in pharmacies) (see know the basics for advice on usage). **Do not give aspirin to children under the age of 16.**

Health Visitor says

Do not forget to keep up-to-date with immunisations to protect your child from measles (MMR vaccination). It is never too late for your children (or you) to catch up with the MMR vaccination if they missed it earlier.

Midwife says

If you are pregnant and have had chickenpox in the past, it is likely you are immune to chickenpox. However, please contact your GP or midwife for advice.