

## **Children's Emergency Department (CHED)**

### **Chicken Pox Discharge Information Leaflet**

Your child has been seen in the Emergency Department and the clinician has assessed that your child may be safely treated at home.

This leaflet is to advise you about how to manage your child's illness and to help you decide where and when to get further advice or assessment if needed.

#### **What is chicken pox?**

Chickenpox is an infection caused by a virus. Most children have chickenpox at some point. It cannot be treated with antibiotics. Treatment is usually for the symptoms.

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

- Fever, aches and feeling unwell often start a day or so before a rash appears.
- At first the rash appears like small red pimples that typically develop into blisters full of fluid and are usually itchy. Spots continue to appear over three to five days and may be at different stages of blistering or crusting.
- The blisters then dry up and crust over.
- Some children feel quite unwell for a few days while others may only appear mildly ill. Most are much better within a week.

#### **How does chickenpox spread?**

Chickenpox is very infectious. The virus spreads in the air from person to person when a person coughs or sneezes. If you have not already had chickenpox, there is a good chance of catching it when:

- You are in the same room as someone with chickenpox for one hour or more.
- You have any face-to-face contact with someone with chickenpox.
- Chickenpox is most infectious 2 days before the rash appears and is still infectious until 7 days after the first spot appeared.
- The rash may start 10-21 days after being exposed to someone with chickenpox.

#### **Protecting other people from chickenpox**

Your child should avoid contact with newborn babies, people who are pregnant and people with a reduced immune system such as people who are on chemotherapy.

Your child should be kept off school, nursery or shared childcare until 7 days after the rash first appeared.

#### **What is the treatment for chickenpox?**

There is no specific treatment for chickenpox. It is a viral illness that will, therefore, not respond to antibiotics. Treatment is aimed at easing the symptoms whilst the immune system deals with the virus.

The following simple measures may help to alleviate symptoms:

### **Fever**

- Give lots to drink. This helps to avoid dehydration and control the fever. Cool yoghurts and ice lollies can help keep your child hydrated.
- Dress appropriately to avoid getting too hot or too cold.
- If your child looks unwell, paracetamol can help.
- Wear smooth, loose-fitting cotton fabrics which should prevent the skin from becoming sore and irritated.

### **Rash**

- There is little evidence that topical treatments such as creams and ointments have any effect on the rash or the itching. If you want to see if something like this would help, we recommend that you consult a pharmacist.
- Antihistamine medicine for children over one year old may help with sleep if itching is a problem. Give a dose at bedtime. You can buy these at pharmacies.

### **When do I need to worry about chicken pox?**

For most children chicken pox is a mild self-limiting illness that only needs the supportive measures outlined above.

Try to see a GP if your child:

- Has a fever for more than 7 days.
- Has a headache that is not relieved with paracetamol.
- The rash looks infected (large, red area around a spot).

Return to the Emergency Department if:

- The whole skin takes on a sun burned appearance.
- Your child develops problems with their breathing and appears to be breathing faster and deeper than usual.
- Your child becomes wobbly on their feet, appears drowsy or has a convulsion.
- Becomes dehydrated as the rash has developed in their mouth.
- Becomes more generally unwell.

We aim to provide the best care for every patient. So, we would like your feedback on the quality of the care you have received from the Hospital. Please visit <http://ratenhs.uk/IQu9vx> or scan QR code:

