



# Chickenpox in Children

Patient information leaflet



GIG  
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WALES



Common Ailments Service

**Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your child's condition.**

Chickenpox is a common illness in children. It is caused by a virus and the main symptom is an itchy, spotty rash that can be anywhere on the body.

At first, children may feel unwell, lose their appetite and have a high temperature. The chickenpox rash then forms in 3 stages:

1. Small red spots appear.
2. After 12 to 24 hours the spots become itchy blisters.
3. Within 5 days the blisters form scabs. The scabs usually fall off after 1 to 2 weeks.



chickenpox spots



chickenpox blisters



chickenpox scabs



## Treatment and Prevention

Chickenpox is usually mild and will get better on its own within 1 to 2 weeks.

### Medicines that can help

**These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for your child.**

Children over 2 months can be given **paracetamol** to help bring their temperature down and help with pain or discomfort.

If your child is over 1 year old and is struggling to sleep because of the itching, your pharmacist may suggest giving them an antihistamine called **chlorphenamine**. Chlorphenamine helps to stop the itching. It may also make your child feel drowsy.

Putting **calamine lotion** on the spots may also help to relieve itchiness.

**Do not** give your child ibuprofen as this may cause serious skin infections in children with chickenpox.

**Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.**

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).

### To reduce itching, you can:

- bathe your child in cool water and pat their skin dry
- put cooling creams or gels on their spots – ask your pharmacist for advice

### To keep your child comfortable:

- make sure they drink enough (try ice lollies if your child is not drinking)
- dress them in smooth, cool, cotton fabrics
- avoid letting them get too hot or too cold
- keep their nails short and clean to reduce scarring or infection from scratching



## Treatment and Prevention

### How chickenpox is spread

Chickenpox infection spreads easily. You can catch it by being in the same room as someone with it. Chickenpox can also be spread through the fluid from the chickenpox blisters. People with chickenpox can infect others from 24 hours before the spots appear until the blisters scab over.

Chickenpox can have serious effects on:

- pregnant women
- babies under 4 weeks old
- people with weakened immune systems, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy
- people who already have skin problems
- people who already have conditions affecting their breathing

Children with chickenpox should stay away from these groups of people and school or nursery until all of the blisters scab over.



## When to Get Help

**Urgently contact your GP or call 111 if your child has symptoms of chickenpox and:**

- they suddenly get worse
- the skin around the chickenpox spots is hot, painful, and red or discoloured
- is peeing less often than usual and are thirsty, dizzy or tired
- has a persistent cough
- has a high temperature that does not come down with paracetamol
- is less than 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or higher or a temperature of 39°C or higher if they are 3 to 6 months old

**Call 999 or go to A&E if your child:**

- has chest pain or has difficulty breathing
- is confused, weak, vomiting, struggling to stay awake, has a bad headache or has a stiff neck

**If you are worried that your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.**



## More information

For more information on chickenpox or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chickenpox/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/skin-conditions/viral-rashes/chickenpox-in-children>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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