

# CHICKENPOX –ADVICE

## Suffolk

Cases of chicken pox have been reported throughout the county and seem to be spreading between children with some schools reporting multiple cases. It is important to recognise that children can become extremely sick with chickenpox and parents and carers should be aware of what to do to help their child if they are suffering from chickenpox.

Chickenpox happens in 3 stages but new spots can appear while others are becoming blisters or forming a scab.

Before or after the rash appears, you might also get:

- a high temperature
- aches and pains, and generally feeling unwell
- loss of appetite

Chickenpox is very itchy and can make children feel miserable, even if they do not have many spots.

**It's possible to get chickenpox more than once, but it's unusual.**

**You'll need to stay away from school, nursery or work until all the spots have formed a scab. This is usually 5 days after the spots appeared.**

### **SPEAK TO YOUR GP OR 111 IF :**

*the skin around the chickenpox blisters is hot, painful and red, but redness may be harder to see on brown or black skin*

*your child has chickenpox and is dehydrated*

*chickenpox symptoms suddenly get worse*

*you're pregnant and have not had chickenpox before, or you're not sure, and you've been near someone with chickenpox*

*you think your newborn baby has chickenpox*

*you have a weakened immune system and have been near someone with chickenpox*

**Chickenpox is common and mostly affects children, but you can get it at any age. It usually gets better by itself after 1 to 2 weeks without needing to see a GP.**

### **However :**

There are groups of children who are particularly vulnerable if they come into contact with chickenpox. These children include oncology patients, renal patients and some respiratory patients. These children can be immunosuppressed /on steroids and if they become unwell or come into contact with chickenpox or develop chickenpox themselves.

Many of these children will have open access to the hospital or clinician they are under but it is important for parents to be able to recognise symptoms and to be on the look out for the first signs of illness in this group of children as they may need specialist treatment and care.

Professionals may need to reiterate the importance of special care for these groups of patients to parents, and also explain why these children are more vulnerable due to their treatment and care.

## TREAT IT

- **Stay hydrated (jelly & ice lollies are great for this)**
- **Paracetamol for pain/fever (avoid ibuprofen & aspirin unless medically advised)**
- **Use anti-itch medicine/cream (e.g. Eurax, Poxclin, antihistamines - avoid calamine lotion as it is drying!)**
- **Try oatmeal in the bath using cool water (pat the skin dry afterwards)**
- **Use cool wet flannels/cooling gels on the skin**
- **Trim nails/use mittens to reduce scratching**
- **Dress in loose clothes**