



Bass Hill Public School

611 Hume Highway,

Bass Hill NSW 2197

Phone: 9644 3431 Fax: 9644 5271

Basshill-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au

www.basshill-p.schools.nsw.edu.au

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Chickenpox and Shingles

Please be aware that there has been a diagnosis of Chicken Pox / Shingles at our school.

What is Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is a viral illness caused by Herpes zoster virus (also known as Varicella-Zoster virus). In children it usually causes a relatively mild illness but it may reappear later in life as Shingles. Chickenpox in adults and immunosuppressed people can be severe.

What are the symptoms?

Chickenpox (varicella) begins with a sudden onset of slight fever, runny nose, feeling generally unwell and a skin rash. The rash usually begins as small lumps that turn into blisters and then scabs. The rash appears over three to four days. At any one time, the lesions of the rash vary in stages of development. Symptoms usually occur two weeks after exposure to the virus. Most people recover without complications, but sometimes the infection can lead to serious complications, such as pneumonia and inflammation of the brain. Persons who are previously vaccinated can still get chickenpox. If chickenpox occurs in a vaccinated person it is usually mild and less contagious than in an unvaccinated person.

How is it spread?

The infection is highly contagious to people who have never had chickenpox or who have not been vaccinated. People are infectious from one or two days before the rash appears (that is, during the runny nose phase) and up to five days after (when the blisters have formed crusts or scabs).

Who is at risk?

Anyone who has not had chickenpox or been vaccinated in the past can get chickenpox. People with a past history of chickenpox are likely to be immune to the virus. Even adults with no history of chickenpox have a chance of being immune (because of past infection that was mild). Doctors sometimes perform a blood test to see if these people need a vaccination.

How is it prevented?

People with chickenpox should avoid others (and not attend childcare or school) until at least five days after onset of the rash and all the blisters have dried.

Pregnant women should avoid anyone with chickenpox or shingles and should see their doctor if they have been around someone with these illnesses.

Mrs Jahshan
Principal
Bass Hill Public School