



## CHICKENPOX

### What is it?

- It is an infectious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus.
- This virus can also cause shingles (herpes zoster).

### Who catches it?

- It is highly contagious and will infect up to 90% of children who come into contact with the disease.
- It is transmitted by direct contact, airborne droplet infection, or by contact with infected articles such as clothing and bedding.
- It takes 10-21 days from being infected to showing symptoms.
- Children under 10 years are most at risk.
- People with **shingles** are contagious to people who have not had **chickenpox**.
- However, it is **not** possible to catch **shingles** from a person with **chickenpox**.

### How serious is it?

- It is usually a mild illness that most healthy children fully recover from.
- Usually begins with cold-like symptoms followed by a high temperature and an intensely itchy, vesicular (fluid-filled blister type) rash.
- Crops of spots appear mostly over the face, scalp, trunk (body) and extremities.
- It is a viral infection and therefore does not respond to antibiotics.
- Calamine lotion (炉甘石洗剂) may ease the itching
- Following the initial infection the virus can lay dormant in the body for several years but may reappear in the form of shingles at anytime. It is not known what initiates the virus to become active.
- It is a serious disease to women in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy and to those in the late stages of pregnancy particularly those who deliver within 7 days of infection. They should be given immunoglobulin to help fight the infection.

### Can it be prevented?

- There is a vaccine but it is not routinely given to children under 12 years in UK. There is still a chance that they may get Chicken Pox, even if they have had the vaccine.
- The vaccine is given to girls' over 13 years that have no immunity.
- The child is infectious as early as 1-4 days before the symptoms appear and up to 4 days after.

### When can the child return to school?

- **The child can return to school 6 - 7 days after the first spots appeared or as per doctor's instructions and when lesions have crusted over.**