Chickenpox (Varicella-Zoster Virus)

What is chickenpox?
A highly infectious disease, also known as varicella, caused by the varicella zoster virus.

What are the symptoms?
- Rash (itchy blisters)
- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Loss of appetite

The rash usually develops on the chest and stomach and then spreads to the face, arms, and legs. The symptoms usually begin 14-16 days after exposure but can range from 10-21 days. The illness lasts about 5-10 days.

How is chickenpox spread?
- It is spread from person to person when infected people cough or sneeze releasing droplets from their nose or mouth.
- It can also be spread through direct contact with the fluid from a blister of an infected person. A person is contagious for 1 – 2 days before the rash appears and continues to be contagious until all the blisters are crusted over (usually 6-8 days).

How is chickenpox diagnosed?
Usually, by disease history and appearance.

How is chickenpox treated?
Most cases are treated with bed rest, fluids, and control of fever.

How can I prevent the spread of chickenpox?
The recommendations for chickenpox vaccination are as follows:
- All children younger than age 13 years should receive 2 doses of chickenpox vaccine (one dose at 12–15 months and a second dose at age 4–6 years).
- Everyone age 13 years and older who has never had the disease should receive two doses, given 4–8 weeks apart.
- Persons of any age who have never had the vaccine should be vaccinated within 3 to 5 days of being in contact with an infected person, which may prevent or modify disease.

Other recommendations for prevention:
- The parents of premature infants, immunocompromised persons, and pregnant women should contact their medical provider if exposed to a person with chickenpox.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash hands thoroughly and often.
- Stay away from others until the blisters are dry and crusted.

Can you get chickenpox if you've been vaccinated?
98% of people are protected from getting chickenpox after receiving 2 doses of chickenpox vaccine.

For further information visit:
- https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/index.html
- http://www.vaccines.gov/diseases/chickenpox/

For safe travelling tips:

Report chickenpox cases to the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health by calling 314-615-1630