



9 February 2024

Dear Parent/Caregiver

Re: Chicken Pox Cases

There have been 2 possible cases of chicken pox identified at Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School.

Chicken pox is a common childhood illness characterised by cold-like symptoms including runny nose, fever, fatigue, and a generalised, itchy rash of blisters that usually starts on the trunk and face and spreads to the arms and legs. About 5% of cases do not develop a rash. It is usually more severe in adults and immunosuppressed people including non-immune pregnant women.

How is Chicken Pox Spread?

By inhaling respiratory droplets from an infected person or by contact with liquid in the blisters.

Incubation period:

Following exposure, it usually takes between 10 and 21 days (14 – 16 days on average) for symptoms to develop.

How long is it infectious to other people?

For 2 days before the rash starts and until all blisters have crusted over.

What are the responsibilities of parents about exclusion from school and childcare?

Children with chicken pox should immediately be excluded from childcare facilities and schools, for at least 5 days after the rash appears and until all blisters have crusted.

Contacts of sick children

Contacts of children with chickenpox are not excluded from school however immunosuppressed classmates or pregnant contacts should be referred to their doctor. High-risk children who are contacts of a case can sometimes be vaccinated in time to prevent infection. Information about this is available through your doctor or the SW Population Health Unit

Treatment

Chicken pox is usually mild, and most patients won't require treatment, but your child needs to see a doctor for possible antiviral treatment if they develop a very high fever, start vomiting or develop rapid breathing or become drowsy.

Immunisation

Chicken pox vaccination is recommended for people of all ages who haven't had chicken pox infection. Free vaccination is routinely given to 18-month-old children and is free of charge up to the age of 19 years. If you don't know if your child still needs this vaccine, please contact your local immunisation provider or phone the Australian Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809.

If you are worried about your child's health, please seek medical advice or ring Health Direct on 1800 022 222 (available 24 hours). For further information please contact the SW Public Health Unit nurses on **9781 2359** during office hours.

Yours sincerely
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