



香港紅十字會
HONG KONG RED CROSS

Chickenpox and Herpes Zoster (Shingles)

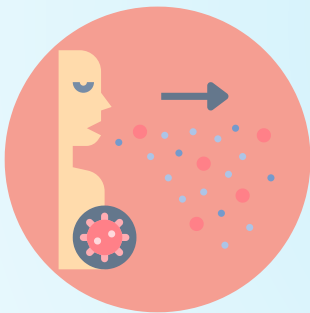
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Chickenpox (varicella) is an acute infectious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It predominantly affects children under 12 years of age. Although almost all persons develop lifelong immunity after chickenpox infection, the virus may remain latent in the body and recur many years later as herpes zoster (shingles).

Clinical features of Chickenpox

- Patient usually presents with fever and itchy skin rashes
- Rashes develop in crops over a period of 5 days on body, then spread to the face, arms and legs
- The rashes first appear as flat spots and later as vesicles. The vesicles continue for 3 - 4 days, then dry up and form scabs
- The patient usually recovers in about 2 - 4 weeks

Mode of transmission



Droplets or air



Direct or indirect contact with the chickenpox or herpes zoster

Incubation period

10 - 21 days

Infectious period

Usually 1 - 2 days before the rash appears and until all vesicles have dried up

Management

- Consult the doctor and follow advice to take medicine (such as fever-lowering medicine and anti-itching lotion)
- If having a fever, drink plenty of water and have adequate rest
- Wear clean cotton gloves during sleep
- Avoid contact with pregnant women and persons with weakened immunity, sick children should stay at home

Prevention

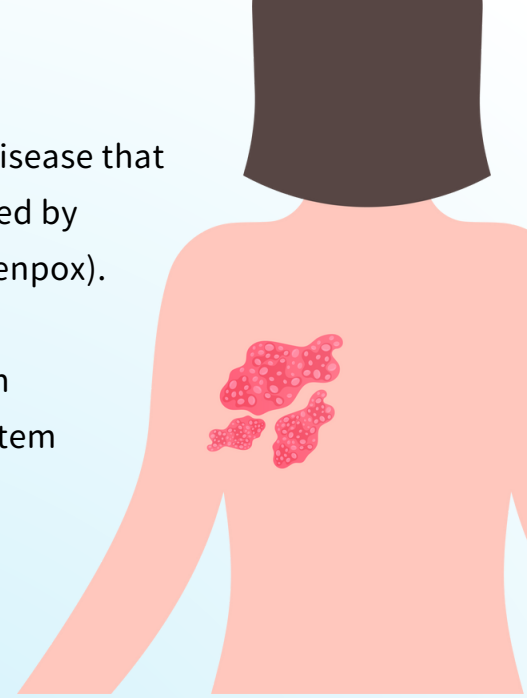
- Maintain good environmental and personal hygiene
- Chickenpox vaccine is available in Hong Kong. About 90% of persons who receive the vaccine will acquire immunity

Under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme, children receive a two-dose course of chickenpox vaccination and may consult family doctors or Maternal and Child Health Centres for details.

Herpes Zoster (Shingles)

is an infectious disease that causes localised belt-like, painful skin rash with blisters. It is caused by varicella-zoster virus which is also responsible for varicella (chickenpox).

The virus resides in the nervous system of patients recovered from chickenpox and may reactivate in times of weakened immune system due to ageing or stress.



Clinical features



- Itch or slight pain with burning sensation typically precedes rash in the affected area for one to three days
- The rash then develops into vesicles or blisters, which further spread in a belt-like pattern and can last from one to 14 days, during which pustules or trickle of blood may appear
- This will be followed by bursting, collapse and drying up of the fluid-filled blisters and crusting over two to three weeks

Management

Current antiviral drugs can shorten the recovery time of Herpes Zoster patients and it is optimal to take it within three to five days of the onset of the disease. Therefore, patients should seek medical consultation as soon as possible and take the medicine according to doctor's instructions.



Prevention

It is advisable to seek a doctor's advice to determine whether to receive vaccination and also to maintain immunity to prevent the reactivation of varicella-zoster virus in the body.

