Chickenpox (varicella) is caused by a virus that can be spread from person to person. The illness begins with small red bumps that become water blisters. Cloudy blisters or open sores that scab over form later. New sores appear for about a week. These blisters can show up anywhere on the body, even in the mouth, on the eyelids, ears and genitals. They most often start on the head, then the body and then the arms and legs with most of the lesions on the body. Typically, the spots appear every day for up to 4 days, so there are lesions in all stages of the pox.

Until every blister scabs over, the child with chicken pox should stay away from other people. He should also stay out of school or day care until then. Chicken pox usually lasts 1 or 2 weeks.

**During this time, your child does not need to see a doctor unless:**

- He becomes confused or hard to wake up.
- He has trouble breathing.
- He vomits 3 or more times.
- He acts different than usual.
- His scabs become soft and drain pus.
- His fever lasts more than 4 days.
- His itching is severe and doesn’t ease with treatment.
- He feels pain when he urinates.
- His skin becomes red and swollen.
- He refuses to drink.

**Chickenpox spreads to other people fast. If you are told to bring your child to see a doctor:**

1. Bring someone with you to watch your child in the car or hallway while you check in.
2. Tell the nurse or clerk your child has chickenpox.
3. The nurse will help you and your child get to an exam room.
Care for your child at home by following some easy steps:

1. Keep his fingernails trimmed short to keep him from scratching. If your child is very young, you may need to cover his hands with socks, gloves or mittens.

2. Give your child a cool bath every three or four hours to ease the itching. Add ½ cup of baking soda or oatmeal solution (Aveeno®) to the bath water. If the itching is severe, you may give your child diphenhydramine (Benadryl®). Check the label or ask your child’s doctor how much to give.

3. If your child’s fever is more than 102° F (38.9° C), you may give Acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Be sure to follow the package instructions for the amount to give your child based on age and weight. Do not give more than five doses in 24 hours. **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN** or products that contain aspirin (check for acetylsalicylic acid on the label).

4. Encourage your child to drink fluids. If the blisters are in your child’s mouth, he may prefer soft, bland foods.

If you have any questions, call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.

Reminder:
It is possible for your child to get a mild case of chickenpox even after receiving the Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine.