

HEALTH ADVISORY



July 12, 2022

Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
1 Lower Navy Hill Road, Navy Hill, Saipan, MP 96950



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chickenpox cases identified in the CNMI

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) is seeing an increase in chickenpox cases within the CNMI. Since June 15, 2022, there have been 7 reported cases of chickenpox.

About Chickenpox

[According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), chickenpox is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). The virus spreads easily from people with chickenpox to others who have never had the disease or never been vaccinated. The virus spreads mainly through close contact with someone who has chickenpox or shingles.

Chickenpox Vaccination

The best way to prevent chickenpox is to get the chickenpox vaccine. Call the CHCC Immunization Program at (670) 236-8745 to ensure that you or your loved ones are up to date with their vaccinations. The CDC recommends two doses of chickenpox vaccine for children, adolescents, and adults. Children should receive two doses of the vaccine—the first dose at 12 through 15 months old and a second dose at 4 through 6 years old.

People with active or recently diagnosed chickenpox should inform their family or friends to stay up to date with their vaccinations or inform health officials of their contact information so they may be properly treated.

Most children do not have any side effects from the chickenpox vaccine shot. The side effects that do occur are usually mild, and may include soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given; fever; mild rash; and temporary pain and stiffness in the joints.

Chickenpox Symptoms

Chickenpox illness usually lasts about 4 to 7 days, and children usually miss 5 to 6 days of school or childcare due to chickenpox. A person with chicken pox is contagious until all of the rash has scabbed or crusted over.

The classic symptom of chickenpox is a rash that turns into itchy, fluid-filled blisters that eventually turn into scabs. Other typical symptoms that may begin to appear 1 to 2 days before rash include: fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, and headache.

Chickenpox Treatment

There are several things that you can do at home to help relieve chickenpox symptoms and prevent skin infections. Calamine lotion and a cool bath with added baking soda, uncooked oatmeal, or colloidal oatmeal may help relieve some of the itching.

Try to keep fingernails trimmed short and minimize scratching to prevent the virus from spreading to others and to help prevent skin breakage and skin infections. If you do scratch a blister by accident, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Do not use aspirin or aspirin-containing products to relieve fever from chickenpox. The use of aspirin in children with chickenpox has been associated with Reye's syndrome, a severe disease that affects the liver and brain and can cause death. Instead, use non-aspirin medications, such as acetaminophen, to relieve fever from chickenpox. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends avoiding treatment with ibuprofen if possible because it has been associated with life-threatening bacterial skin infections.

When to Seek Medical Care

It is important that you **call your health care provider before visiting**. For people exposed to chickenpox, call a health care provider if the person:

- Has never had chickenpox and is not vaccinated with the chickenpox vaccine
- Is less than 1 year old
- Is pregnant
- Has a lowered ability to fight germs and sickness (weakened immune system)

If these individuals get chickenpox, it can lead to more serious illness. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911, especially if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Fever that lasts longer than 4 days
- Fever that rises above 102 degrees Fahrenheit (38.9 degrees Celsius)
- Any areas of the rash or any part of the body becomes very red, warm, or tender, or begins leaking pus (thick, discolored fluid), as these symptoms may indicate a bacterial infection
- Difficulty waking up or confused behavior
- Difficulty walking
- Stiff neck
- Frequent vomiting
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe cough
- Severe abdominal pain
- Rash with bleeding or bruising (hemorrhagic rash)

For more information about CHCC programs, follow @cnmichcc on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; visit <http://www.chcc.health>; or call (670) 234-8950.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.health/pressrelease.html>.