Varicella *(Chickenpox)*

What is chickenpox?

- An illness that causes a blister-like rash.
- Anyone can get chickenpox, but it is more common in persons under 15 years of age. It is usually a mild illness, but it can be serious in young infants and adults.

How is it spread?

- By direct contact with the rash or through the air from coughing or sneezing.
- A person can spread the illness to others 1-2 days before the rash appears, until blisters have formed scabs (usually about 5 days).
- It takes 10-21 days for someone to develop chickenpox once they become infected.
- In households with susceptible siblings, 70-90% will get sick.

What are the symptoms?

- Itchy rash beginning on trunk and face and spreading to the rest of the body
- Illness lasting about 5-7 days
- Small flat spots becomes blister-like that scab over after about 7 days
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Headache

Treatment for chickenpox

- **Do not treat with aspirin**.
- Over-the-counter lotions are available to help relieve some of the itching.

Prevention

- Immunization is the only effective way to prevent chickenpox.
- Children, adolescents and adults should be currently vaccinated:
  ◊ First does 12-15 months
  ◊ Second dose 4-6 years
  ◊ People over 13 years of age who have never been vaccinated or had chickenpox should get two does at least 28 days apart

NOTE: Chickenpox can cause a condition later in life called 'shingles.' Shingles also causes a rash that can spread chickenpox.to others. Persons with shingles may attend school and child care if the rash is covered.

Control Measures:

- Report cases and outbreaks to public health
- Varicella vaccine given within 3-5 days of exposure may prevent sickness
- EXCLUDE anyone with chickenpox from school, daycare or healthcare until all blisters have formed scabs
- Teach children to cough or sneeze into their arm/shoulder not in their hands.

Questions?

Contact Disease Control, Adams County Health Department at 720-200-9200.