

# SAFETY BULLETIN

November 2018



## CHICKEN POX: Rite of Passage or Dangerous Pathogen?

### High Risk Categories:

If you are in one of the categories below, chickenpox can be serious or even deadly:

- Babies
- Adolescents
- Adults
- Pregnant women
- Those with a weakened immune system

Most children who get chickenpox recover completely.

### What about Shingles?

Everyone who gets Chickepox can get shingles later in life. The virus stays in the nerve tissue near your spinal cord and brain, reactivating years later to cause intense pain and blistering. There is a vaccine available for shingles and the chickenpox vaccine may also be used.

### Chickenpox Can Kill

Many people remember getting chickenpox as a child and taking a few days off school to lay in bed itching some red sores. No big deal, right? For people in high risk categories, it can cause streptococcal infections of the skin and soft tissues, pneumonia, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), bleeding problems, bloodstream infections, dehydration and in rare cases, death.

### The Chickenpox Vaccine

The CDC recommends children get the first dose of the vaccine at 12-15 months, and the second at age 4-6.

Before the chickenpox vaccine was introduced in 1995, between 100 to 150 people in the U.S. died each year from the virus. Now it is under 20 per year. If you are 13 years old or older, you can still get the chickenpox vaccine: two doses at least 28 days apart. Members of STSIG who are on the health plan and meet age requirements can get the chickenpox and shingles vaccines for free. See sidebar.

### What are the Symptoms of Chickenpox?

Chickenpox is caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). It is extremely contagious and causes the following symptoms:

**An itchy rash of up to 500 blisters**

**Fever**

**Headache**

**Fatigue**

**Stay at home  
until blisters  
are scabbed  
over and dry**

### RESOURCES

Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov>

California Department of Public Health: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov>

For any questions regarding this Safety Bulletin, or requests for free onsite safety classes, please contact Kurt Walling, Loss Prevention Manager for STSIG. [kwalling@stsig.org](mailto:kwalling@stsig.org), or 530-221-6444.