

Date

Dear Parent,

Peel Public Health has received reports of chickenpox in your child's school. We would like to provide you with information about this common childhood illness.

You child could develop signs and symptoms of chickenpox for up to 21 days after they have been exposed to the illness. If your child develops signs and symptoms of chickenpox, do not send them to school until assessed by a doctor. **Call the doctor's office to let them know that your child may have been in contact with someone sick with chickenpox.**

Chickenpox is caused by the varicella-zoster virus. Signs and symptoms of chickenpox include:

- Slight fever
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Runny nose
- A red spotty rash that becomes small, itchy, fluid-filled blisters. Eventually the blisters dry up and crust over.

Immunization provides the best protection against chickenpox. The vaccine is recommended for healthy individuals over the age of 12 months who have never had chickenpox. Talk to your doctor if you think your child should receive the vaccine.

What can you do if your child has chickenpox?

- There is no need to isolate a child who has the chickenpox rash. Chickenpox is most infectious 12-24 hours before the rash appears. The child may return to school if s/he is feeling well enough to participate in activities as usual.
- Keep your child home if they have a fever.
- Give a non-prescription pain reliever such as acetaminophen to relieve a headache, fever or general aches and pains. **Do not give Aspirin™ or any product that contains acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) to a child less than 18 years of age.**
- Use calamine lotion to help relieve itching.
- Put a cool moist washcloth on itchy areas for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Wash your hands often to prevent infection.
- If blisters become infected or your child is very sick, contact your doctor.

Sincerely,

Communicable Diseases Investigation Team
Region of Peel – Public Health