

Chicken Pox

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Definition

Chickenpox (varicella) is a common and extremely infectious childhood disease that also occasionally affects adults and characterized by clusters of maculopapular skin eruptions that become vesicular and produce a granular scab.



Causes and Incidence The cause is the varicella-zoster virus, which invades the body through the air or by direct contact with an infected person. Once someone has been infected with the virus, symptoms appear in about 10-21 days. The period during which infected people can spread the disease is believed to start one or two days before the rash appears until all the blisters have formed scabs, usually four to seven days after the rash breaks out. For this reason, doctors recommend keeping children with chickenpox away from school for about a week. Chicken pox is a common childhood illness; with susceptibility typically extending from 6 months of age to the time the disease is contracted. Epidemics occur in the winter and early spring in 3- to 4-year cycles. Immunity is produced after a course of the disease. This is highly contagious disease. After continuing household exposure, as would occur in the family, almost all susceptible are infected.

Symptoms The first signs and symptoms are mild headache, low-grade fever, malaise, and anorexia, which occur about 24 hours before the first rash appears. The initial rash, which is maculopapular, appears on the head and mucous membranes and evolves within hours to itching, teardrop-shaped vesicles containing a clear fluid. The vesicles break and crust over within 6 to 8 hours. New lesions erupt in successive crops on the trunk and in sparse sprinkles on the extremities. The acute phase of the disease lasts 4 to 7 days, and new lesions seldom appear after the fifth day. All lesions are generally healed in 2 to 3 weeks.

Potential Complications The disease may be severe in adults or in individuals whose T-cell immunity is depressed or who are taking corticosteroids or undergoing chemotherapy. Complications include conjunctival ulcers, encephalitis, meningitis, thrombocytopenia, secondary abscesses, cellulitis, pneumonia, sepsis, Guillain-Barre syndrome, and Reye's syndrome. Scratching of the lesions may cause scarring and disfigurement. Chickenpox in pregnant women is believed to be more serious than in nongravid females. The rate of fetal wastage is not increased. Seven to 9 percent of infants born to mothers who have had chickenpox early in pregnancy, however, have been found at birth to have "varicella embryopathy". These infants are born with cerebral damage and a wide variety of ocular findings and characteristically have a scarred, atrophic limb. They are generally small for gestational age and may have other abnormalities as well. When mother develops chickenpox within a few days of delivery, "chickenpox of the newborn" may occur. If the occurrence of the chickenpox is between 5 and 10 days after birth, it is associated with higher risks of serious disease and even death.

Diagnostic Tests Diagnosis depends primarily on clinical examination of the characteristic lesions. Giemsa-stained scrapings from the lesions will show multinucleated giant cells, and a culture of vesicular fluid will grow the varicella-zoster virus.

Treatment

Treatment focuses on reducing symptoms of chickenpox. The patient should drink plenty of fluids and eat simple, nutritious foods. It is found that dry sweet fruit like dry Dates, Raisin are very useful supplement during chicken pox infection. The patient should not scratch the blisters as this can lead to infection or scarring. For babies, light mittens or socks on the hands can help guard against scratching.

Homoeopathic Remedies: The most common Homoeopathic medicines used for Chicken Pox are:

Antim Tart: Eruption does not come out properly or has been repelled, great difficulty of breathing; face bluish, purple, drowsiness and twitching. Indicated as well in the beginning for the dry teasing cough as in putrid pustules with typhoid pneumonia and tendency to paralysis of lungs, vomiting of viscid mucus, clogging air-passages.

Belladonna: During first stage, high fever with cerebral congestion; intense swelling of skin and of mucous membranes, with tickling cough, dysuria, and tenesmus of bladder; sleeplessness, with desire to sleep; delirium and convulsions; photophobia; ophthalmia.

During later stages Belladonna modifies the itching of the desiccating pustules.

Bryonia: Precursory stage, with gastric symptoms, or later when the chest symptoms indicate it; eruption slow in developing.

Pulsatilla: Mild cases; catarrhal symptoms prominent, coryza and profuse lachrymation; cough dry at night and loose in daytime; child sits up in bed to cough; earache; fever with hot head and dry lips, but complains very little of thirst; eruption when fully out often has a dark appearance; itching of eyes, Amelioration by rubbing; dry lips Amelioration by licking them with tongue; chronic loose cough after measles. Diarrhea due to suppression of eruptions.

Rhus Tox: Typhoid symptoms, dry tongue; great restlessness; patient wants to get out of bed, notwithstanding his great debility; sordes on lips and teeth; confluent chickenpox with great swelling at first, but afterwards the eruption shrinks and becomes livid; blood in pustules; bloody stools.

Variolinum: Especially where the disease throws itself with full force on throat. Given steadily during the disease it will run a milder course, changing imperfect pustules into regular ones, which soon dry up; it promotes suppuration and desiccation, and prevents pitting.

Zincum Met: Great exhaustion and prostration from the start, preventing the eruption from coming out, especially after night-watching and anxiety; dryness, soreness of mouth, plate, uvula, tongue and tonsils covered with sordes, with foul breath.

Conclusion

Homoeopathic Medicines have proven their effective in treating chick pox as compared to other system of medicines with ease.

Warning

The above given information of the disease is for the general awareness for the commoners. Homoeopathic medicines should not be taken without the proper guidance of qualified and registered Homoeopathic physician.

References

1. Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia
2. Mosby's Medical Encyclopedia
3. Gale's Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine
4. Homoeopathic Materia Medica By Dr. Clark