

# Chicken Pox

By Jennifer Kenny

<sup>1</sup> Polly was sleepy and cranky. She didn't feel well. She began running a fever. She felt this way for two days, almost as if she had the flu. Then a red, bumpy rash developed and became very itchy. She had around 150 blisters. What was wrong? This combination of an itchy rash with flu-like symptoms must mean the **chicken pox**.



<sup>2</sup> Chicken pox is caused by the **varicella-zoster virus**, or VZV. It is much more common among children than adults. Four million children a year suffer from chicken pox. Ninety percent of them are under age 15. It can be much more serious if an adult comes down with chicken pox.

<sup>3</sup> A virus is not alive until it is in a living cell. Once in a living cell, it can reproduce. The living cell is the host. The virus attacks the cell, sends its own DNA and RNA code, and can then spread.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of the chicken pox virus, it attacks the nose lining and mouth first. Then it moves to the skin where the itchy, red rash develops. Then it hits the nerve cells where it is inactive, but can become active later on. In fact, the virus can cause **shingles** later on.

<sup>5</sup> The chicken pox virus is highly **contagious**, meaning that it is easily passed to another person. It spreads quickly through families, classes, playgroups, and day care facilities. It is an airborne virus that can spread when the person coughs or sneezes.

<sup>6</sup> The chicken pox virus has an **incubation period**, or a time before symptoms appear, of ten to twenty-one days. During this time, the virus multiplies but there is no clue of any illness. Meanwhile, the disease spreads.

<sup>7</sup> Very often, the person suffering from the virus starts out with flu like symptoms. Then the rash begins. The pox, or lesion, starts off flat and red. Then a bump, or papule, forms. It starts to look like a blister with pus, or pustule. Then the pustule forms a dry, hard covering. The most important thing, but probably the hardest thing to do as well, is to try not to scratch so there is less risk of infection and scarring later on.

<sup>8</sup> There is no cure for chicken pox. There is an antiviral drug named Zovirax, which relieves symptoms, but it is not for everyone. No aspirin should ever be given to a child with chicken pox because of the possibility of Reye's syndrome

developing. The aspirin can cause delirium, severe vomiting, convulsions, or a coma.

<sup>9</sup> To relieve itchiness, there are several home remedies. A cool bath in uncooked oatmeal, baking soda, or cornstarch may help. Calamine lotion helps, too. Parents often put gloves or socks on the hands of little children so they can't scratch while they are sleeping.

<sup>10</sup> In 1995, the American Academy of Pediatrics approved the use of Varivax, or a chicken pox vaccine, for children 18 months to 12 years who have never had the chicken pox. There are exceptions to the recommendation so the doctor should always discuss these recommendations individually. The vaccine is used to prevent the disease. It is actually made of the virus so the vaccine tricks the body and causes the body to create antibodies to fight the disease. Questions remain about the long-term effectiveness of the vaccine, but it is incredible to think that this once common childhood illness might be a thing of the past.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Science Pd: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chicken Pox

<p>1. Chicken pox is caused by _____.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A The varicella-zoster virus</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B A vaccine related virus</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Varivax</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Zovirax</p>	<p>2. How many children suffer from chicken pox a year?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A 4 million</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B 10 million</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C 1 million</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D 40 million</p>
<p>3. A virus needs a host to reproduce.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p>	<p>4. Which word means easily passed to another person?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Incubation</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Virus</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Vaccine</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Contagious</p>
<p>5. What is the incubation period of chicken pox?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A 10 to 21 days</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B 10 to 21 weeks</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C 10 to 21 minutes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D 10 to 21 hours</p>	<p>6. Which is the first stage of the chicken pox rash?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Papule</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Pox</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Pustule</p>
<p>7. There is a cure for chicken pox.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p>	<p>8. Which should never be used with a child suffering from chicken pox?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Cornstarch</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Uncooked oatmeal</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Aspirin</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Calamine lotion</p>