

Causes, Treatment and Management of Chickenpox

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Chickenpox, also known as Varicella, is a highly contagious viral infection caused by the Varicella zoster virus. It is most commonly seen in children, but can also occur in adults who have not previously had the disease or been vaccinated against it. In this essay, we will discuss the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of chickenpox.

Causes

Chickenpox is caused by the Varicella zoster virus, which is a highly contagious virus. The virus can be spread through the air or by direct contact with the fluid from the blisters of an infected person. The virus can also be spread by touching objects that have been contaminated with the virus and then touching the mouth or nose. Once the virus enters the body, it begins to multiply in the respiratory tract and lymph nodes. After a period of incubation, which can last up to 21 days, the virus enters the bloodstream and spreads throughout the body. This is when the characteristic symptoms of chickenpox, such as fever and rash, begin to appear. People who have had chickenpox develop immunity to the virus, but the virus can remain dormant in the body and reactivate later in life, causing a condition called shingles. It is important to note that chickenpox is most contagious from 1-2 days before the rash appears until all blisters have formed scabs. This means that people with chickenpox should avoid contact with others, especially those who have not had the disease or been vaccinated against it, until they are no longer contagious.

Symptoms

The symptoms of chickenpox usually appear within 10-21 days after exposure to the virus. These symptoms include fever, headache, loss of appetite, and a general feeling of being unwell. A red, itchy rash usually appears on the body, face, scalp, and limbs within a day or two of the onset of symptoms. The rash progresses to fluid-filled blisters that eventually scab over and heal. The rash can last for up to 10 days, and the itching can be very uncomfortable.

Diagnosis

Chickenpox is usually diagnosed based on the characteristic rash and symptoms. However, if there is any doubt about the diagnosis, a blood test can be done to confirm the presence of the Varicella zoster virus.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for chickenpox, but symptoms can be managed with medications and home remedies. Over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be used to reduce fever and relieve pain. Antihistamines can be used to relieve itching. Calamine lotion or oatmeal baths can also help to soothe the skin. It is important to avoid scratching the blisters as this can lead to bacterial infections and scarring.

In severe cases, antiviral medications such as acyclovir may be prescribed to reduce the severity of symptoms and speed up the healing process. However, these medications are generally only used in people who are at high risk of developing complications from chickenpox, such as pregnant women, adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

Prevention

The best way to prevent chickenpox is through vaccination. The chickenpox vaccine is recommended for all children aged 12-15 months and a booster dose at 4-6 years of age. The vaccine is also recommended for adults who have not had chickenpox or been vaccinated against it. In addition to vaccination, good hygiene practices can help to prevent the spread of chickenpox. This includes washing hands frequently, avoiding contact with people who have chickenpox, and covering any open blisters or sores.

Chickenpox is a common viral infection that can cause discomfort and inconvenience. It is easily spread, but can be prevented through vaccination and good hygiene practices. Most cases of chickenpox are mild and do not require specific treatment, but complications can occur, especially in high-risk individuals. It is important to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe or if there are concerns about complications.

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