

chicken pox

This viral infection is spread by droplet contamination and its very infectious incubation stage lasts 10-14 days before the spots appear. The intensity of the illness is very individual; some people have a very mild response with a few flat spots, while others have almost the whole body covered. The first rash like symptoms are itchy fluid filled vesicles clustered, firstly on the trunk and then spreading to the limbs, face and scalp. After the vesicles the clusters of spots form crusty scabs and then start to dry up.

Incubation is generally a silent stage; if you know the illness is in the community or a family member is already diagnosed the prophylactic **Varicella 30c** can be used for the whole family.

The first stage can be either a rapid febrile or feverish state where you may use remedies such as **Aconite**, **Ferrum phos** or **Belladonna** based on the symptoms. Alternatively it can be a gradual onset and remedies such as **Gelsemium**, **Bryonia**, **Mercurius**, **Ant tart** or **Rhus tox** may be indicated.

If the child has more pronounced chest symptoms with a rattily, mucousy cough then consider **Ant tart** as it may help bring out the spots and move the illness towards resolution. If the rash is slow to develop a dose or two of **Sulphur** or **Pulsatilla** may help progress the illness.

Once diagnosed and the rash has appeared, move onto the appropriate remedies to match the individual symptoms. Keep the nails short and dab vinegar, bicarb soda or **Lavender** oil onto the spots.

Rhus tox is a commonly indicated remedy and covers the classic symptoms; clear vesicles with a dry, extremely itchy base, aggravated by scratching. The patient is very restless and may have stiff achey muscles. Worse from rest and in the evening. Thirsty for cold drinks especially milk.

Kali mur is indicated for vesicles containing a thick, white content. The glands may be swollen and a white or grey coating of the base of the tongue.

Ant tart for vesicles that are large, slow to develop and weep a yellow fluid that crusts like dried honey and later scarring bluish. The person may also be drowsy, sweaty and have a rattily cough. Craves apples, fruit and small sips of water.

The **Pulsatilla** person will be thirstless and craving fresh air, company and sympathy. They want to be held and to sleep with the parent. Any discharges are yellowish-green.

Consider **Mercurius** for sick kids with pus filled blisters and lesions with red surrounds, offensive night sweat and nasal discharge that burns and smells like old cheese.



After the initial fever has cleared give a dose of **Nat mur** daily as it is understood to help clear the virus so that it doesn't lie dormant in the nerve tissues, possibly resulting in shingles later in life. A daily dose of **Calc phos** during convalescence can have a tonic effect and aid general recovery. A child who is slow to recover and remains tired and sluggish will usually respond well to twice daily doses of **Carbo veg** for approximately a week. Alternatively you could use **Sulphur** especially if the patient fits the general remedy picture; warm blooded, untidy, averse to bathing and worse from a warm bath.

What else can I do:

Rather than suppressive pharmaceuticals it is preferable to use homoeopathic or herbal creams, balms or oils. **Bite 'n Sting balm** softened between your fingers and smeared on or mixed into a neutral cream or lotion works very well. Or try one of these to cool and relieve the itch. Diluted **Ledum** tincture or **Aloe Vera** gel dabbed onto spots with a cotton bud. **Sandalwood**, **Calendula** or **Lavender** oils also cool and relieve the itch; they promote healing and help prevent scarring. Or consider a soothing **oatmeal** bath; finely grind rolled oats in a blender or food processor, put a couple tablespoons in a muslin cloth or similar & hang it from the tap as you run the bath. The water will take on a milky look and silky feel as the oatmeal dissolves. Allow your child to soak for 15-20 minutes and take care as the oatmeal can make the bathtub quite slippery.