Talking to Your Doctor About Chickenpox

by Rick Alan

En Español (Spanish Version)

You have a unique medical history. Therefore, it is essential to talk with your doctor about your personal risk factors and/or experience with chickenpox. By talking openly and regularly with your doctor, you can take an active role in your care.

General Tips for Gathering Information

Here are some tips that will make it easier for you to talk to your doctor:

- Bring someone else with you. It helps to have another person hear what is said and think of questions to ask.
- Write out your questions ahead of time, so you don't forget them.
- Write down the answers you get, and make sure you understand what you are hearing. Ask for clarification, if necessary.
- Don't be afraid to ask your questions or ask where you can find more information about what you are discussing. You have a right to know.

Specific Questions to Ask Your Doctor

About Your Risk of Developing Chickenpox

- Should I be tested to see if I have immunity to chickenpox?
- After possible exposure to chickenpox, what is the incubation period?
- How long is someone contagious after they have contracted the disease?
- How do I know if my immune system is suppressed?

About Treatment Options

- Should I be vaccinated against chickenpox?
- At what age can my child be vaccinated against chickenpox?
- What over-the-counter medications can I give my child for itching, pain, and fever relief?
- If I’m at risk for severe disease, what medications can I take to help prevent complications?
  - What are the benefits/side effects of these medications?
  - Will these medications interact with other medications, over-the-counter products, or dietary or herbal supplements that I am already taking?
- At what point should I seek medical care for possible complications of chickenpox?
- How can I best keep the blisters from scarring?

About Lifestyle Changes

- I’m pregnant (or planning on getting pregnant in the near future). Are there any special precautions I should take?
- What precautions should I take if I’m traveling abroad?
- How long do I need to keep my child isolated after he/she has contracted chickenpox?

About Outlook

- Are there any possible long-term complications from chickenpox?

REFERENCES: