

Symptoms of scarlet fever

The symptoms of scarlet fever usually take two to five days to appear after infection.

However, the incubation period (the time between exposure to the infection and symptoms starting) can be as short as one day or as long as seven days.

The symptoms of scarlet fever include a [sore throat](#), [headache](#), high temperature (38.3C/101F) or above), flushed face and swollen tongue. The distinctive pink-red rash develops 12 to 48 hours later.

Rash

Red blotches are the first sign of the rash. These turn into a fine pink-red rash that feels like sandpaper to touch and looks like [sunburn](#). It may also be itchy.

The rash usually starts on the chest and stomach, but soon spreads to other parts of the body, such as the ears, neck, elbows, inner thighs and groin.

The rash doesn't usually spread to the face. However, the cheeks become flushed and the area just around the mouth stays quite pale. The rash will turn white if you press a glass on it.

The rash usually fades after about a week, but the outer layers of skin, usually on the hands and feet, may peel for several weeks afterwards.

In milder cases, sometimes called scarlatina, the rash may be the only symptom.

Slapped cheek syndrome

Slapped cheek syndrome (also called fifth disease or parvovirus B19) is a viral infection that's most common in children, although it can affect people of any age. It usually causes a bright red rash on the cheeks.

Although the rash can look alarming, slapped cheek syndrome is normally a mild infection that clears up by itself in one to three weeks. Once you've had the infection, you're usually immune to it for life.

However, slapped cheek syndrome can be more serious for some people. If you're pregnant, have a blood disorder or a weakened immune system and have been exposed to the virus, you should get medical advice.

Symptoms of chickenpox

The main symptom of chickenpox is a red rash made up of spots or blisters.

It usually takes between one and three weeks for symptoms to appear after becoming infected (the incubation period).

Early symptoms

Sometimes other symptoms may start a day or two before the rash appears.

These can include:

- feeling tired and generally unwell
- a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or over
- feeling sick
- a [headache](#)
- aching, painful muscles
- loss of appetite

Not everyone has these symptoms. They tend to be more common and more severe in older children and adults with chickenpox.

Chickenpox rash

The chickenpox rash develops in three main stages.

1) spots



The rash starts off as small, raised red spots. The spots often first appear on the face or trunk before spreading to other parts of the body. There may just be a few spots or there may be hundreds covering most of the body. Sometimes spots can appear on the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet, inside the ears or mouth, or around the bottom or genitals.

2) blisters



During the following hours or the next day, the spots develop a fluid-filled blister on top. The blisters may be very itchy, but it's important not to scratch them. Scratching could spread the infection to others and increases the chances of complications such as a more serious skin infection.

3) scabs and crusts



Over the next few days, the fluid in the blisters turns cloudy and the blisters begin to dry out and scab over. New spots may keep appearing for a few days after the rash begins, so there may be a mix of spots, blisters and scabs at the same time. Chickenpox is contagious until every blister has scabbed over, which usually occurs by around five or six days after the rash started. The scabby crusts will fall off by themselves over the next week or two.