

### Red Spots on the Body

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A 12-year-old boy presents with an itchy rash on his body. He had slight malaise and fever the week before. The rash started as rose-coloured macules and progressed rapidly to become papules, vesicles and pustules.

#### What is your diagnosis?

Chickenpox, caused by the varicella-zoster virus, is mostly a mild disease in healthy children, but can be debilitating in immunocompromised individuals or susceptible adults. The disease is highly contagious. The lesions start as rose-coloured macules and progress rapidly to become papules, vesicles with the classic “dew drop on a rose petal” appearance, pustules and finally, crusts. The distribution of the lesions is typically central, with the greatest concentrations on the trunk. Characteristically, lesions are intensely pruritic and appear in crops. The most common complication associated with chickenpox is secondary bacterial infections of the skin followed by post-inflammatory scarring of the lesions. The diagnosis is mainly clinical and treatment symptomatic.

Oral acyclovir should be considered in high-risk individuals. IV acyclovir is effective for the treatment of chickenpox in immunocompromised individuals and for serious complications of chickenpox in normal patients. To eradicate chickenpox, universal childhood immunization with varicella vaccine is the way to go. The



Figure 1. Red spots on the body.

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend a routine two-dose varicella vaccination program for children, with the first dose administered at 12- to 18-months-of-age and the second dose at four- to six-years-of-age. The ACIP further recommends two doses of varicella vaccine, four to eight weeks apart, for all susceptible adolescents and adults and a catch-up second dose for everyone who received one dose of varicella vaccine previously.

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