Risk Factors for Chickenpox

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En Español (Spanish Version)

A risk factor is something that increases your likelihood of getting a disease or condition.

It is possible to develop chickenpox with or without some of the risk factors listed below. However, the more risk factors you have, the greater your likelihood of developing chickenpox. If you have a number of risk factors, ask your doctor what you can do to reduce your risk.

If you are not immune to chickenpox, factors that will increase your risk of contracting the disease include:

- Coming in direct contact with someone infected with chickenpox
- Sharing eating utensils or other personal items with someone who has chickenpox

Some populations are at a higher risk for chickenpox, these include:

- Persons of any age who have neither had chickenpox in the past nor been immunized against chickenpox (varicella)
- Newborns, especially those born prematurely, under 1 month old, or whose mothers had never contracted chickenpox prior to pregnancy
- People with a weakened immune system (chemotherapy, HIV, AIDS, congenital or acquired immunodeficiencies)
- People with cancer
- Pregnant women
- People who are taking immunosuppressant drugs (e.g., high-dose steroids)
- People who are moderately or severely ill and are not yet fully recovered
- People who have certain disorders affecting the blood, bone marrow, or lymphatic system
- Susceptible pregnant women

Traveling Abroad

If you are not immune to chickenpox, traveling abroad can increase your risk of contracting chickenpox. The disease is much more prevalent outside the US due to much lower rates of vaccination.

REFERENCES:


National Centers for Infectious Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod .
