**Scoil Chéile Chríost Rathmore N.S.**

**Chicken Pox**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

There has been a case of Chicken Pox within your child’s classroom and your child may have been exposed. If your child has not had Chicken Pox before it is quite likely the he/she will catch it.

**What is Chicken Pox?**

Chicken Pox is a common childhood illness. Fever and cold symptoms are often the first signs of illness and are followed by the appearance of the typical rash. The rash starts as small pink bumps, often around the neck, ears, back and stomach. These develop a little water blister which in turn becomes yellow and oozy and ultimately crusty as it dries. The rash spreads outwards to involve the whole body finally involving the lower arms and legs. People may have only a few spots or may be virtually covered in them. In children it is usually a relatively mild illness however occasionally complications develop. The incidence of complication is much higher in infected adults. Chicken Pox can be a very severe illness in people with weakened immunity.

**Why should I be concerned about Chicken Pox?**

Chicken Pox can be a devastating infection in people with a seriously weakened immune system (e.g. patients with leukaemia or after organ transplantation). In adults Chicken Pox is a much more significant illness than in children and there is a greater risk of complications developing. There is a medicine available (Acyclovir) which if taken early in the illness can shorten the illness. Chicken Pox infection in women who are in the early stages of pregnancy can result in congenital abnormalities in the infant.

**What should I do now?**

If your child is normally healthy, Chicken Pox is likely to be a relatively mild illness and no specific precautions are necessary. Symptoms usually develop 8 to 21 days after exposure. The infected person can spread infection for up to 3 days before the rash appears and until the last pox is crusted and dry. If your child has a weakened immune system, please contact your Doctor and let them know that they may have been exposed. There is a antibody preparation (V-ZIG) that can be given to prevent illness, but it must be given within 72 hours of exposure, so contact your doctor promptly. There is a specific medicine to treat Chicken Pox, but it is usually only given if there is a significant risk of complications developing.

**What should I do if I think my child has Chicken Pox?**

Contact your doctor and arrange for him/her to see the child and confirm the diagnosis. Do not bring the child to the crowded surgery waiting room as this will just spread the infection further. **Do not use Asprin or any products that contain asprin to control fever if your child has Chicken Pox** as this has been associated with the development of a rare but serious disease called Reye’s syndrome.

**Can my child stay in school?**

Many children with Chicken Pox are too sick to attend school and are more comfortable at home. Children can spread the infection to others as long as there are any spots which are not crusted and dried. Children with spots that are crusted and dried can safely attend school.

Thank you for giving this your attention. Your family doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer further questions that you might have about chicken pox.

Yours sincerely,

Robbie Jameson

Principal.