

# Preventing Chickenpox in Pregnant Women

Based on the history provided, you may be at risk of contracting Chickenpox (Varicella). Women who have not had chickenpox or have not received the vaccination can be at a greater risk of contracting chickenpox. Chickenpox in pregnant women is a serious condition and may cause problems with mother and/or baby.

## Implications for Pregnant Women:

- The most serious risk for the pregnant woman is contracting Varicella (Chickenpox) Pneumonia.
- If Varicella Pneumonia is not treated, it can lead to death.
- Symptoms usually occur around the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> day after the appearance of the chickenpox rash and usually starts as a mild nonproductive cough. It can quickly worsen and symptoms, such as fever, difficulty breathing and chest pain, may occur.
- Pregnant women with chickenpox are very contagious and can expose both the baby and anyone else she may encounter.

## Possible impact on the Baby:

- Babies can be born with chickenpox.
- Chickenpox during pregnancy may cause birth defects.
- Babies can be born with Congenital Varicella Syndrome. The syndrome causes the baby to have scars on their body; defects in limbs; problems with their eyes; brain damage or intellectual disabilities
- More severe problems have been seen in babies whose mother had chickenpox after she was 4 months pregnant.

## Ways to reduce your risk:

- Avoid anyone who may have chickenpox or any unknown rash.

## What you should do, IF you should encounter someone who might have chickenpox:

1. Contact your health department by calling \_\_\_\_\_ to let the Maternal Health Nurse know immediately.
2. If it is Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM, ask to speak to \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If after 5 PM, on weekends, or a holiday, you should call \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Let them know that you are a pregnant patient at \_\_\_\_\_; your estimated due date; and that you believe you may have been exposed to chickenpox.
5. You should include the time you were exposed and if you are having any symptoms like a cold or cough.

**Talk with your Physician, Advanced Practice Practitioner, or Maternal Health Nurse if you have any questions.**