

S M A L L P O X



These images of Smallpox lesions were obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

WHAT IS SMALLPOX?

Smallpox, which is caused by the variola virus, is a contagious, infectious disease that can be fatal. Smallpox was eliminated in 1980 after successful worldwide vaccination programs. Smallpox vaccinations for the general public were no longer offered after the disease's elimination.

Smallpox is passed from person-to-person through infected body fluids or contaminated objects such as bedding or clothing. Smallpox is rarely spread in the air and is not known to be transmitted by insects or animals.

SIGNS/SYMPTOMS

The infected person often shows no signs or symptoms of Smallpox for the first 7 to 17 days. The first symptoms last for about 2 to 4 days and include: fever, malaise, headache, body aches, and sometimes vomiting.

The first sign of smallpox is a rash that appears on the tongue and in the mouth. The rash usually appears as small red spots. These spots develop into sores that break open, causing the person to become very contagious. At this time, a rash develops on the face, arms, legs, hands, and feet of the infected person. The rash develops into raised bumps which contain a thick fluid and has a depression in the middle, which looks similar to a belly button. The bumps eventually become firm to the touch. Two weeks after the first rash appears, most of the bumps have formed a crust and scabbed over. Once the scabs have fallen off, the person is no longer contagious.

TREATMENT

There is not a specific treatment that has proven to be effective in treating Smallpox. Research is continuously being conducted to find an effective treatment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Can I die from Smallpox?**
Yes, Smallpox may be fatal. The majority of Smallpox patients recover, but death may occur in 30% of the cases.
- **How can I prevent myself from getting Smallpox?**
There is a vaccine for Smallpox that is given to children 7 years old and younger called the DTaP. It is given in combination with the vaccines for Diphtheria and Tetanus.
- **I was immunized as a baby, is it still good?**
A person is protected from Smallpox for 3 to 5 years after the vaccination occurs, and then slowly, the vaccination decreases in its protection. If a person receives another vaccination, the protection lasts even longer. The vaccine has been effective in 95% of those who have been vaccinated.
- **What are the side effects of the vaccination?**
For most people, the smallpox vaccine is safe and effective. Most people experience a sore arm, fever, and body aches. People who have skin conditions (especially eczema or atopic dermatitis), weakened immune systems, heart conditions, and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not receive the vaccine since they are at risk of having serious or life threatening reactions to the vaccine.
- **Do I have a high risk of getting Smallpox?**
There have been no new cases of Smallpox since 1977. The vaccine is currently being stockpiled by the government in case of an emergency that may require vaccination of the general population.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Department of State Health Services
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov>