

**DERBYSHIRE JOINT AREA PRESCRIBING COMMITTEE  
(JAPC)**

## **Management of pregnant women & neonates in contact with chickenpox & shingles**

Antivirals are recommended for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for all at risk groups apart from susceptible neonates exposed within one week of delivery (either in utero or post-delivery).

Varicella zoster Immunoglobulin (VZIG) is only recommended for those for whom oral antivirals are contraindicated.

Oral Aciclovir is now the first choice of PEP in all susceptible pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy.

**The GP/midwife should contact Microbiology at their local hospital, without delay** (Chesterfield or Derby) to discuss the case, including: when was the contact; closeness and duration of contact; and history of chickenpox or shingles in the mother.

If a blood test is required, the Microbiologist can arrange stored booking blood to be tested for Varicella Zoster IgG. However, if no sample is held, a sample will need to be obtained by GP/midwife and sent to Microbiology. If the pregnant lady is immune, PEP is not required. If not immune, further testing may be required at Sheffield and the sample forwarded. If the patient is then found to be non-immune, the GP needs to issue prescription for PEP (antiviral, unless contraindicated) as per specialist advice.

### **Expert advice :**

- Virology laboratory at Northern General Hospital, Sheffield Tel: 0114 2266477
- Royal Derby Hospital: 01332 340131 for on-call Microbiologist for 'out of hours', otherwise contact Sheffield for 'in hours'.
- Chesterfield Royal Hospital 01246 277271 for on-call Microbiologist

Nottingham University Hospital (NUH)

Advice may be needed, as appropriate (e.g. if the blood sample is stored at NUH).

- Contact the duty virologist on 0115 9709163 for 'in hours'
- Contact the on-call microbiologist (via switchboard - 0115 924 9924) for 'out of hours'

**For guidance on the following (& more) see UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) ['Guidelines on post exposure prophylaxis \(PEP\) for varicella or shingles](#) (January 2023) and chapter 34 of 'Green book' [Varicella: the green book, chapter 34](#) (use latest version of on-line Varicella chapter):**

- Risks of varicella to the foetus, neonate and pregnant women
- Dosage & administration of indicated PEP:
- Management of at risk individuals following significant exposure to chicken pox or herpes zoster
- Definition of a significant exposure to varicella zoster virus
- Management of pregnant women in contact with chicken pox & shingles
- Determination of VZ immune status
- Management of neonates in contact with chicken pox & shingles
- Effectiveness of prophylaxis in neonates and pregnant women

### **Other sources of advice**

UKHSA (East Midlands) on 0344 2254524