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Smallpox

What is Smallpox?

Smallpox is an illness that can be spread easily. It is caused by the *Variola* virus. The name smallpox comes from a Latin word. It describes the pus-filled blisters that show up on a person's face and body. There are two types of smallpox. They are *Variola major* and *Variola minor*. The first type is the more common of the two. It is the worst of the two and it can be deadly.

History

It is believed that smallpox began in India or Egypt 3,000 years ago. Before a medicine was created, many people died. The ones that did not die became blind and could not have children. The virus spread through Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas around the 1500s. It spread quickly during this time. Almost all of the people who caught the disease died.

Over 30 years ago, immunizations helped to get rid of smallpox.

Signs and Symptoms

There are many signs that a person has smallpox. These signs include:

- small pus-filled blisters on the face, arms, and body
- flu-like symptoms (tiredness, headaches, body aches)
- high fever
- mouth sores and blisters that spread into the throat
- skin rashes that get worse
- in some cases, vomiting



Signs of smallpox include skin rashes.

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How is it spread?



Smallpox spreads whenever an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes.

Smallpox is a contagious disease. This means it spreads and is caught easily. The virus can be spread through tiny drops of saliva or mucus from an infected person. It spreads whenever the person talks, coughs, or sneezes. Smallpox can also be passed from person to person. Direct or indirect contact such as close contact, kissing, etc., can spread the virus. It spreads the easiest when a person has the rash. Until the last scab falls off, the virus can be spread.

Treatments

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Complications

People who survive smallpox can have the following problems:

- Scars on the skin caused by the rash
- Blisters
- Serious eye problems
- Swelling of the joints
- Pneumonia



Vaccination has basically destroyed smallpox.

Preventions

The smallpox vaccination was started in 1789. It works so well that by 1980 smallpox was basically eliminated.

Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. What are the two kinds of smallpox?
2. Which
3. What is the most common sign that someone has developed smallpox?
4. Describe
5. How is
6. What year did smallpox vaccinations begin?
7. What are
8. List two complications of smallpox.

Extension Questions:

9. Do you agree with the U.S. government's decision not to include the smallpox vaccinations in the regular childhood vaccination schedule? Why or why not.
10. Do some

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References

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