

Important Information about Chickenpox and Varicella Vaccine

PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

What is Chickenpox (Varicella)?

- Chickenpox is a common childhood disease caused by the varicella virus.
- It usually causes a mild fever followed by an itchy rash.
- On rare occasions it can lead to severe illness and hospitalization; it can be life threatening.
- It can be more severe in adolescents and adults.
- It can cause serious illness during pregnancy both for mother and baby.
- Chickenpox is spread easily from person to person, through the air, saliva, or liquid from the blisters.
- It is more common during late winter and early spring.
- It is preventable through immunization.

What is Varicella Vaccine?

- Varicella vaccine contains a tiny amount of live virus that is specially treated so that it won't cause the disease in healthy people.
- It is a very safe vaccine that gives about 97% protection from chickenpox.
- The vaccine is given by an injection.
- Two doses are required.

Who Should Receive the Varicella Vaccine?

The Nova Scotia schedule recommends that this vaccine be given to

- children: at 12 months and again between 18 months and 6 years of age
- anyone living in a household or caring for someone whose immune system is weak or damaged by disease or medication and who has not had chickenpox already
- all health-care workers who could catch chickenpox or spread chickenpox to others during the course of their work and who have not had chickenpox already
- women of childbearing age who have not had chickenpox.

CAUTION

SOME PEOPLE SHOULD CHECK WITH A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER BEFORE THEY RECEIVE THIS VACCINE.

- People whose immune systems are weak because of disease or certain medications.
- Anyone who has received any blood products within the preceding 3–11 months.

Who Should NOT Receive the Varicella Vaccine?

- Babies less than 1 year old
- This vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women. If a woman wishes to get this vaccine, she should ideally wait at least 1 month before getting pregnant.
- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or any component of varicella vaccine.
- Anyone who has had immunization with a live vaccine (such as the vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella) within one month. However, two live vaccines can be given on the same day.
- People who are sick or have a fever (temperature of 39.5°C/103°F or greater).

Please read other side.

What to Expect Following Immunization with **Varicella Vaccine**

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Your child has received varicella vaccine. This vaccine is important in protecting your child from chickenpox.

People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.

What Are Possible Side Effects of the Varicella Vaccine?

- The most common side effects from this vaccine are redness, swelling, and mild pain at the injection site.
- Some may get a mild fever and a few chickenpox-like spots 1 to 2 weeks after vaccination. (The rash should be covered if your child may be in contact with someone who has a weak immune system.)

As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home. Follow the instructions that come with the product. These medications should not be taken if you have certain medical conditions. Talk to your health care provider about your medical history before using either of these medications.

Call Your Health Care Provider If

- The fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Your child's temperature is 39.5°C (103°F) or greater.
- The fever does not come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen is taken.
- Your child has convulsions.
- Your child appears ill with other symptoms.

Questions?

If you have any questions about chickenpox or varicella vaccine, please call your local Public Health Services office or your health care provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- Immunize Canada at immunize.ca/en/default.aspx
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at phac-aspc.gc.ca
- the Canadian Paediatric Society at cps.ca
- 811 at <https://811.novascotia.ca/>