

# 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 the pregnant parent and baby.
- Chickenpox is highly contagious, and spreads easily from person to person through direct contact, or when someone breathes the same air as an infected person.
- 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.
- The vaccine is given by an injection.
- Two doses are required.

### Who should receive the Varicella vaccine?

The Nova Scotia Routine Immunization Schedule for Children, Youth & Adults recommends the routine immunization of:

- Children: first dose at 12 months of age and second dose between 18 months of age and before starting school
- Teenagers from age 13 years old to less than 18 years old who are vulnerable to the varicella virus.
- Adults from age 18 years old to less than 50 years old who are vulnerable to the varicella virus.

### 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?

- Children less than 12 months of age.
- This vaccine is not recommended for pregnant people. If a person gets the Varicella vaccine, they should 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 gotten, or plans to get, a live vaccine (such as the vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella) 30 days before or after getting the Varicella vaccine. However, two live vaccines can be given on the same day.
- People who are sick or have a fever (temperature of 38.5°C/101.3°F or greater).

*Please read other side.*

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

## VACCINE INFORMATION

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 the possible side effects of the Varicella vaccine?

- The most common side effects from this vaccine are redness, swelling, and soreness at the injection site.
- Some children may get a mild fever and a few chickenpox-like spots within 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.

**Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen (e.g., Advil) and acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) can be used to manage symptoms following vaccination, including fever. Some people should not take these medications. Talk to your health care provider or pharmacist if you have questions, or are unsure if you or your child should take these.**

### Call your health care provider if:

- The fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Your child's temperature is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or greater.
- The fever does not come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen is taken.
- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child appears ill with other symptoms.

### Questions?

If you have any questions about chickenpox, or the Varicella vaccine, please call your local Public Health office (see list of offices here: [www.nshealth.ca/public-health-offices](http://www.nshealth.ca/public-health-offices)), or your health care provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- Nova Scotia Health, Public Health at <https://www.nshealth.ca/public-health/immunizations>
- Immunize Canada at [immunize.ca](http://immunize.ca)
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at [phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- the Canadian Paediatric Society at [cps.ca](http://cps.ca)
- 811 at <https://811.novascotia.ca/>