IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION

Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine

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.
- It 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 the varicella vaccine?

- Varicella vaccine contains a tiny amount of live virus that is specially treated so that it won't cause the disease.
- Immunization is the best way to prevent varicella.
- The vaccine is given by an injection.
- Two doses are required for full protection.

Who should get the varicella vaccine?

People born in 2006 or later:

- Two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (MMRV) vaccine or the varicella vaccine are strongly recommended.
- These doses are usually given at 12 and 18 months as part of Nova Scotia's routine vaccine schedule.
- People who missed these vaccines can catch up for free, if they have not had chickenpox after turning 1.

People born between 1996 and 2005:

- One dose of the varicella vaccine is recommended if you have not had it before, or if you have not had chickenpox after turning 1.

Some people should check with a healthcare 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 get 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 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 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.

www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

13086/MAY26 REV26-27

nova scotia health

IMMUNIZATION AFTERCARE

Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine

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?

- As with any other vaccine, the most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site.
- Some children may get a mild fever and 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.

Do not give aspirin (ASA) or any products that contain aspirin. Giving aspirin to a child with chickenpox can trigger Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening condition that involves brain and liver swelling.

Some people should not take these medications. Talk to your healthcare provider before using either of these medications as they are not recommended for people with certain medical conditions.

Call your healthcare provider if:

- A fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- A fever is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher.
- A fever doesn't come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen are taken.
- A seizure occurs.
- Other illness or symptoms occur.

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) or your healthcare provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the following websites:

Nova Scotia Health Public Health
www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

Immunize Canada
immunize.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.canada.ca/public-health

Canadian Paediatric Society
cps.ca

811
811.novascotia.ca

www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

13086/MAY26 REV26-27

nova scotia health