



Immunization: Varicella (chicken pox) Vaccine

This vaccine protects people against chicken pox.

Who should get the vaccine?

People, who are at least 12 months of age, are eligible to receive this vaccine. This is a 2 dose series.

As per the publicly funded schedule the first dose of the vaccine will be offered at 15 months of age and the 2nd dose will be offered at 4 years of age in combination with the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

Who should not get the vaccine?

- People who have allergies to the vaccine or any component of the vaccine
- People who have already had chicken pox
- People who have had an anaphylactic reaction to a prior dose of the vaccine.
- Pregnant women should not be vaccinated
- People with weakened immune systems or those on medications to suppress their immune system

Common Side Effects

Most reactions tend to be mild and include some soreness, redness, itching and/or a rash where the needle was given. A low-grade fever (approximately 38° C) may occur.

Some children may get a very mild case of chicken pox one or two weeks after they get the vaccine but are not likely to be contagious.

For more information please call the
Northwestern Health Unit office in your area

www.nwhu.on.ca

Chicken Pox

Chicken pox is caused by the *varicella-zoster virus*.

Children with chicken pox will feel flu-like symptoms such as fatigue, mild headache, fever up to 39° C (102° F), chills and muscle or joint aches a day or two before the itchy, red rash appears.

The rash appears anywhere on the body as raised red blisters that are extremely itchy. The child will be most infectious (contagious) from one to two days before the rash appears. These blisters dry up and form scabs in four to five days.

Chicken pox is extremely contagious. It spreads very quickly from person to person. The most common way the infection is spread is through the air if someone with chicken pox coughs or sneezes. You can also get chicken pox if you touch a blister or the liquid from a blister.

A pregnant woman with chicken pox can pass it on to her unborn baby before birth. Mothers with chicken pox can also give it to their newborn baby after birth.

In about 5 to 10 per cent of healthy children, chicken pox infection can lead to more serious problems such as:

- bacterial skin infections and/or necrotizing fasciitis ("flesh-eating disease")
- pneumonia (infection of the lungs)
- encephalitis (infection of the brain)
- infection of other sites (e.g., blood)
- birth defects may occur if the baby gets chicken pox from their mothers before they are born.