



Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine

What is it?

- The varicella (chickenpox) vaccine protects against chickenpox – an illness caused by a virus called varicella zoster.
- A person who has had chickenpox can get a painful rash called shingles years later. For more information see Facts About...Chickenpox and Facts About...Shingles
- There are four chickenpox vaccines approved for use in Canada
 - VARIVAX®III – protects against chickenpox virus only
 - VARILRIX® - protects against chickenpox virus only
 - PRIORIX-TETRA® - protects against chickenpox virus as well as measles, mumps and rubella
 - ProQuad - protects against chickenpox virus as well as measles, mumps and rubella

How effective is the chickenpox vaccine?

- Chickenpox vaccine gives children 94.4% protection after one dose and 98.3% protection after the second dose.
- Two doses of the chickenpox vaccine protect children 100% from severe chickenpox infections and complications.
- Someone who has had the vaccine may still get chickenpox, but they recover faster and the symptoms are usually mild.

Who should get the vaccine?

- Two doses of any chickenpox containing vaccine are recommended; anyone 12 months of age or individuals born on or after January 1, 2000 can receive the vaccine for free.
- People who are at more risk of being exposed to the disease, such as health care providers or emergency service workers.

What is the schedule for the vaccine?

- For maximum protection, individuals should receive 2 chickenpox vaccines at least 6 weeks apart.



Are there side effects with the vaccine?

- Side effects are usually mild and last a short time, the most common side effects are redness, pain and swelling where the needle was given. Other side effects may include irritability, headache, fatigue, low grade fever and mild rash.
- If you think a serious reaction is developing, seek medical attention right away. Any unusual or significant changes in your health or your child's health after the immunization should be reported to a health care provider and to the Health Department.

Who should NOT get the vaccine?

- Children less than 1 year of age.
- If you have a severe allergy (anaphylaxis) to any previous vaccine(s) or to any component of the vaccine.
- Pregnant people.
- Immunocompromised individuals should not receive live vaccines (e.g. varicella vaccine).
- People on chronic salicylate therapy (ASA) should avoid receiving immunization for six weeks.
- High risk clients can be immunized for free by their doctor. Please refer to high risk criteria in the Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule for Ontario.

Do children need the vaccine to go to daycare and/or school?

In Ontario, one dose of the chickenpox vaccine is required under the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA); children are due for chickenpox immunization at 15 months and become overdue at 16 months of age.

- In Ontario, two doses of the chickenpox vaccine are required after the first birthday under the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) for students born on or after January 1st, 2010. Students require the first dose when they first enter school. Students will be overdue for the 2nd dose of chickenpox vaccine when they are 7 years of age.

Don't forget to update your record of protection

- After you or your child receives a vaccine, update your immunization record (yellow card). For children in school or daycare, please visit durham.ca/immunize to report online, or call the Health Department to update your child's immunization records. Keep your records in a safe place!

April 24, 2021

