

Protect your child against Varicella (chickenpox)

For Grade 9 students



Why your child should get the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine ...

- To protect your child from getting chickenpox.
- The protection your child received from the initial dose of varicella vaccine may be weakening; therefore a booster dose is required to provide continued protection against chickenpox.
- Before the vaccine, approximately 350,000 varicella cases and 1,500 to 2,000 varicella-related hospitalizations occurred each year in Canada.

Who should get this vaccine?

Grade 9 students born in 2004 who:

- have not received two doses of varicella vaccine
- do not have confirmation of a blood test that they had chicken pox after the age of one year

Who should NOT get this vaccine?

- Individuals who are allergic to any part of the vaccine or its packaging.
- Women who are pregnant or who are planning to become pregnant less than one month of receiving the vaccine. It is safe for household contacts of pregnant women to receive the varicella vaccine.
- Individuals with a weak immune system (check with healthcare professional).
- Individuals with tuberculosis.
- Individuals who have received another live vaccine in the last month. However, varicella vaccine can be given on the same day as another live vaccine.
- Individuals who had a blood transfusion or a blood product in the last 3 to 11 months.

What you should know about chicken pox ...

People who may have more severe symptoms and may be at high risk for complications include

- Adolescents
- Adults
- Pregnant women
- Individuals with a weak immune system

The chickenpox virus can be spread from person to person through the air or by contact with fluid from the chickenpox blister.

Symptoms	Possible Complications
• Headache	• Scars
• Loss of appetite	• Pneumonia
• Fever	• Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) leading to brain damage
• Tiredness	• Septicemia (infection of the blood)
• Rash, fluid-filled blisters	• Severe skin infections (necrotizing fasciitis)
• Itching	• Death
	• Varicella infection during pregnancy can cause birth defects and death of the baby

Who can get chickenpox?

The disease can occur at any age.

What you should know about the varicella vaccine

The vaccine is safe and very effective in preventing disease:

- 94.4% protected following a single dose
- 98.3% protected following a second dose.

What to expect following the varicella immunization ...

The most common reactions include soreness, redness and/or swelling where the vaccine was given and a mild fever. A rash may occur around the area where the vaccine was given within 5 to 26 days after immunization. The varicella (chicken pox) like blisters are not usually infectious and will disappear.

Please note: As is the case with any vaccine, there is a small risk that a serious allergic reaction can occur. **Therefore, students are asked to remain on site for at least 15 minutes after the vaccine is given so that possible immediate reactions can be monitored and treated.**

How to treat fever and pain ...

- A cold compress on the injection site may reduce discomfort.
- You may give your child acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil®).
- Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) should **NEVER** be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

What else you should know ...

- If your child has a fever or illness other than a minor cold, the nurse may delay giving this vaccine.
- If your child's immune system is affected by illness, steroid medication or cancer treatments, the decision to immunize must be made in consultation with your family physician.
- If your child has had an allergic reaction to a vaccine in the past, or if you have any questions, please contact your local Public Health office.
- Adverse reactions especially severe or unusual reactions in the four weeks following immunization should be reported to the local Public Health office. Please see your doctor if your child has a severe reaction.

Further information is available at www.gnb.ca/publichealth