



Varicella Vaccine

What is the varicella vaccine?

The varicella vaccine protects against varicella, commonly called chicken pox. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada and is provided free as part of the New Brunswick Routine Immunization Schedule for children.

What are the benefits of the varicella vaccine?

The vaccine is the best way to protect against varicella or chicken pox. Varicella can cause serious illness and complications. When your child is immunized, they also help protect others.

How is the vaccine given?

The varicella vaccine is given as an injection into the upper arm.

Who should receive the varicella vaccine?

In New Brunswick the vaccine is provided to children as a series of two doses. The first dose is given at 12 months of age and the second at 18 months. The vaccine is given at the same time as other routine childhood immunizations.

Other people who would benefit from receiving the vaccine include:

- Women of childbearing age.
- Household contacts of immunocompromised people.
- Health-care workers.
- Adults who may be exposed occupationally to varicella e.g., teachers of young children, day-care workers.
- Immigrants and refugees from tropical climates who are more likely to be susceptible to varicella.
- Children and adolescents undergoing chronic salicylic acid treatment.
- People with cystic fibrosis.

Who should not receive the varicella vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to anyone who:

- had a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine in the past;
- is allergic to any of the ingredients of the vaccine or its container, including neomycin; or
- is pregnant or planning to become pregnant less than one month of receiving the vaccine.

*It is safe for household contacts of pregnant individuals to receive the varicella vaccine.

Speak with your health-care provider if you or your child has a weakened immune system or had a blood transfusion or received other blood products within the last three to 11 months as vaccination may need to be delayed.

VACCINE FACT SHEET

What are the possible reactions after receiving the varicella vaccine?

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 five to 26 days after immunization. The varicella (chicken pox) like blisters are not usually infectious and will disappear.

With any vaccine there is an extremely rare possibility (less than one in a million people) of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. For this reason, it is important to remain in the clinic for 15 minutes after receiving the varicella vaccine. Signs of this reaction may include rash, difficulty breathing or swelling of the throat, tongue, or lips. This reaction can be treated.

What can be done if you have a reaction to the Varicella vaccine?

- A cold compress at the injection site may reduce discomfort.
- For discomfort and fever, you can give your child medicine by following the manufacturer's instructions. Ask your healthcare provider what medicine is best.

Any unexpected or serious reaction to a vaccine should be reported to your health-care provider.

Where can I get the Varicella vaccine?

In New Brunswick, the publicly funded varicella vaccine is provided to children through your local Public Health office or your primary care provider.

Further information

Inform your immunization provider if you or your child has any health problems or allergies.

Your immunization provider will give you a record of your or your child's immunizations. Keep this record in a safe place and bring it with you when the next immunization is due.

If you or your child has any unusual reactions to the vaccine, or you have any questions or concerns, please contact your primary care provider, [public health office](#) or Tele-Care (811)

Useful websites

- Government of New-Brunswick [Vaccines and immunization \(gnb.ca\)](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Vaccines for children: About vaccines - Canada.ca](#)
- Caring for kids: [Immunization | Caring for kids \(cps.ca\)](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada: [Vaccination for adults - Canada.ca](#)

Last reviewed on December 12, 2024