



Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine

About chickenpox

Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). It causes an itchy, blister-like rash which spreads over the entire body. Chickenpox can also cause:

- fever
- tiredness
- loss of appetite
- headache

Before the chickenpox vaccination program began, chickenpox used to be very common in the U.S. Each year in the early 1990s, there were more than 4 million cases of chickenpox, up to 13,500 hospitalizations, and 100 to 150 deaths.

Chickenpox can lead to rare, but serious risks, such as:

- skin infections
- pneumonia
- swelling of the brain or spinal cord covering
- infections in the blood, bones, or joints
- shingles (herpes zoster) infection which causes a painful rash years after chickenpox infection

Chickenpox is usually mild, but it can be serious in infants younger than 1 year of age, adolescents, adults, pregnant people, and people with a weakened immune system. People at risk who do not have immunity against chickenpox should talk to their healthcare provider about vaccination.

Varicella vaccine is 90% effective when both doses are received. Most people vaccinated with 2 doses will be well-protected for life.

Important details

CDC recommends 2 doses of varicella vaccine for children.

- **Dose 1** between **12–15 months** of age.
- **Dose 2** between **4–6 years** of age.

Older children, adolescents, and adults also need 2 doses of varicella vaccine if they are not already immune to chickenpox.

Chickenpox vaccination is especially important for:

- healthcare professionals
- people who care for or are around those with weakened immune systems
- teachers and childcare workers
- residents and staff of nursing homes/other residential settings
- college students
- inmates and staff of correctional facilities
- military personnel
- non-pregnant women of childbearing age
- adolescents and adults living with children
- international travelers



What to expect after vaccination

It's normal to experience immune response after vaccination—this is how you know the vaccine is working. Side effects are usually mild and go away on their own within a few days. Some normal immune responses after the varicella vaccine include:

- pain, redness, or swelling at the injection site
- rash
- fever

People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting varicella vaccine. In some cases, your healthcare provider may decide to postpone vaccination until a future visit. As with any medicine, there is a very small chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death.

Tell your vaccination provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- had an allergic reaction after a previous dose of varicella vaccine
- has any severe, life-threatening allergies
- has a weakened immune system
- is taking salicylates (such as aspirin)
- had a blood transfusion or received other blood products
- has tuberculosis
- has gotten any other vaccines in the past 4 weeks

Some people should not get varicella vaccine, including:

- pregnant people
- people with serious immune system problems

Those with weakened immune systems who do not have immunity to chickenpox may consider varicella vaccination. Talk to your healthcare provider for more information.

Varicella vaccination statistics

90%

decrease in deaths due to chickenpox since U.S. vaccination began in 1995.

84%

fewer hospitalizations due to chickenpox since U.S. vaccination began in 1995.

91 million cases

prevented through U.S. chickenpox vaccination program from 1995 to 2020.

For more vaccine information, go to immunize.utah.gov or scan the QR code!

