

# Important Information about **Chickenpox** and Varicella Vaccine



## PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY

### What is Chickenpox?

- Chickenpox is a common childhood disease caused by the varicella virus.
- It usually causes a mild fever followed by an itchy rash.
- On rare occasions it can lead to severe illness and hospitalization; it can be life threatening.
- It can be more severe in adolescents and adults.
- It can cause serious illness during pregnancy both for mother and baby.
- Chickenpox is spread easily from person to person, through the air, saliva, or liquid from the blisters.
- It is more common during late winter and early spring.
- It is preventable through immunization.

### What is Varicella Vaccine?

- Varicella vaccine contains a tiny amount of live virus that is specially treated so that it won't cause the disease in healthy people.
- It is a very safe vaccine that gives about 97% protection from chickenpox.
- The vaccine is given by an injection.

### Who Should Receive the Varicella Vaccine?

The Nova Scotia schedule recommends that this vaccine be given to

- babies 12 months of age
- children between the ages of 1 and 6 years and in grade 4 who have not had chickenpox or who have not had the vaccine already
- anyone living in a household or caring for someone whose immune system is weak or damaged by disease or medication and who has not had chickenpox already
- all health-care workers who could catch chickenpox or spread chickenpox to others during the course of their work and who have not had chickenpox already
- women who have recently had a baby and whose blood tests show they have not had chickenpox already

### CAUTION

#### Who Should Not Receive the Varicella Vaccine?

- Babies less than 1 year old
- People whose immune systems are weak because of disease or certain medications (unless their specialist recommends it)
- Women who are pregnant, or trying to get pregnant (women should not get pregnant for at least 1 month after having the chickenpox vaccine)
- People who have severe allergies to neomycin or gelatin
- People who have had an anaphylactic reaction to any vaccine ingredients
- Anyone who has had immunization with a live vaccine (such as the vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella) within one month. However, two live vaccines can be given on the same day.
- People who have already had chickenpox



*Please read other side.*

# What to Expect Following Immunization with **Varicella Vaccine**



## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Your child has received varicella vaccine. This vaccine is important in protecting your child from chickenpox.

*People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.*

### What Are Possible Side Effects of the Varicella Vaccine?

- The most common side effects from this vaccine are redness, swelling, and mild pain at the injection site.
- Some may get a mild fever and a few chickenpox-like spots 1 to 2 weeks after vaccination. (The rash should be covered if your child may be in contact with someone who has a weak immune system.)
- On rare occasions, a severe allergic reaction may occur.

*As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen at home.*

### Fever Management

A fever is not necessarily bad, but it may make your child uncomfortable. If you think your child has a fever

- Take your child's temperature.

- If the temperature is over 38.5°C (101°F), you may give your child a medicine that will help control the fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra). **Do not exceed the recommended dosage.**

- You may wish to ask your pharmacist which form of medicine is best for your child and how much to give. If you do not get a precise dose for your child from your doctor or pharmacist, you may use the table below as a guide.
- Give the correct dose for your child's weight every 4 to 6 hours and NOT more often.
- Encourage your child to drink extra fluids, such as juice and/or water.

### NOTE:

Acetaminophen comes in 3 forms for young children:

- drops—which **MUST** be given with the dropper provided with the brand of medicine
- liquid—given using a teaspoon or a 5-mL measure
- chewable tablet—which can be given to children old enough to chew and swallow food when asked

### Call Your Doctor If

- The fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Your child's temperature is 39.5°C (103°F) or greater.
- The fever does not come down after acetaminophen is taken.

### Questions?

If you have any questions about chickenpox or varicella vaccine, please call your local Public Health Services office or your family doctor.

For more information on immunization, please visit the websites of

- the Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness at [www.immunize.cpha.ca](http://www.immunize.cpha.ca)
- the Public Health Agency of Canada at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

### Dosage Recommendations for Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) for controlling fever (if any) after immunization

Weight		Single Dose (mg)	Drops 80mg/1.0ml		Elixir 160mg/5ml		Chewable Tablets	Junior Strength Tylenol
kg	lbs		mL	Dropperful(s)	mL	Teaspoonful(s)	80mg each	160mg each
2.5 - 5.4	6 - 11	40	0.5	1/2	1.25	1/4	-	-
5.5 - 7.9	12 - 17	80	1.0	1	2.50	1/2	-	-
8.0 - 10.9	18 - 23	120	1.5	1 1/2	4.0	3/4	-	-
11.0 - 15.9	24 - 35	160	2.0	2	5.0	1	2	-
16.0 - 21.9	36 - 47	240	3.0	3	7.5	1 1/2	3	1 1/2
22.0 - 26.9	48 - 59	320	-	-	10.0	2	4	2
27.0 - 31.9	60 - 71	400	-	-	12.5	2 1/2	5	2 1/2
32.0 - 43.9	72 - 95	480	-	-	15.0	3	6	3

Base the dosage on your child's weight, not their age. The single dosage may be repeated every 4 to 6 hours, if necessary. **Never give more than 5 doses in 24 hours.** Read the package insert for specific instructions.