

Ⓢ **Who should NOT get the vaccine?**

- Babies less than one year old.
- Anyone whose immune system is weak or damaged from 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 one month after getting the chickenpox vaccine).
- Anyone who has severe allergies to neomycin or gelatin.
- Anyone who has had immunization with a live vaccine (such as measles, mumps and rubella) within one month.
- People who have previously had chickenpox or chickenpox vaccine; they likely already have protection.

Ⓢ **For more information**

If you would like to know more about chickenpox vaccine or disease, please contact the nurse at your local public health office.

During the two weeks after being immunized, if your child develops a rash or gets sick and has to visit a doctor, hospital or clinic, please talk to one of the nurses at the public health office where your child received immunization.



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CHICKEN?



GET VACCINATED FOR CHICKENPOX

Information for Parents

DEAR PARENT / GUARDIAN

Chickenpox is a common disease of childhood that can cause serious illness in some individuals. A vaccine is now available and Alberta is adding chickenpox vaccine to the childhood immunization program.

The vaccine protects about 97% of children who get it from the chickenpox virus. Those who do not get complete protection usually develop a much milder disease if they are exposed to the virus.

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is caused by the varicella virus. The virus causes an itchy rash, which looks like small water blisters.

How is chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox spreads easily from person to person.

It can spread through the air when a person is in the room with someone who has chickenpox, and may be spread by someone who has the disease even before the typical rash breaks out.

You can also catch it through contact with liquid from a chickenpox blister or saliva from an infected person.

A pregnant woman with chickenpox can pass it to her baby before birth and can give it to her newborn baby.

What are the possible complications of chickenpox?

- If the blisters get infected, people may be left with disfiguring scars.
- Chickenpox can lead to severe pneumonia or problems with other internal organs including the brain.

- Pregnant women who get chickenpox may give birth to babies with birth defects, such as skin scars, eye problems, or incompletely formed arms or legs.
- Chickenpox can be very severe or even life threatening to adults, newborn babies, and those who have weak immune systems.
- Chickenpox virus can reactivate later in life to cause shingles, a painful rash that can be very severe, especially in the elderly.

About chickenpox vaccine

Chickenpox vaccine is given by needle and is a safe vaccine.

- Children from one to 12 years of age need one shot.
- Anyone 13 years of age or older needs two shots, four weeks apart.

The vaccine contains a tiny amount of the chickenpox virus, which has been specially treated so it will not cause disease.

It can be given at the same time as the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (in the other arm).

What side effects might my child have?

- One or two days after the shot, some children will get a red, swollen sore arm.
- Some children will get a mild fever and a few chickenpox-like spots 1 or 2 weeks after the immunization.

As with other vaccines, severe allergic reactions are possible.