



Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

FACT SHEET

CHICKENPOX (VARICELLA VACCINE)



Vaccination against chicken pox is required for all children attending school in Ontario born after January 1, 2010. Children can be protected from chickenpox by getting two doses of the vaccine as recommended for the best protection. Children born on or after January 1, 2000 are eligible to receive 2 free doses of the vaccine.

What Is Varicella (Chickenpox)?

Chickenpox is a common illness caused by the varicella-zoster virus. Most people get chickenpox by the time they are 15 years old. In Canada, there are about 350,000 new cases each year among children and teens under 15 years of age. It causes fatigue, mild headache, fever, chills and muscle or joint aches. The raised itch red blisters can be anywhere on the body. The spots are like small water blister. Some people have only a few blisters while others can have as many as 500.

How is Varicella spread?

It can spread from person to person through direct contact. Chickenpox is very contagious; you can get chickenpox if you touch a blister or the liquid from a blister. You can also get chickenpox if you touch the spit of a person who has chickenpox. It also spreads through the air from someone with chickenpox who is coughing or sneezing. A pregnant woman with chickenpox can pass it onto her baby before birth.

At what age should my child be vaccinated with Varicella vaccine?

In Ontario, children are eligible to receive the publicly funded Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine at 15 months of age. They should receive a second dose of the vaccine between the ages of 4 – 6 years; usually as MMRV.



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Is the Varicella vaccine safe?

Yes. Serious Side effects are rare. Mild pain, swelling or redness for a few days is common at the spot where the needle was given. Some people will get a very mild case of chickenpox 1 or 2 weeks after they get the vaccine. They will most likely have less than 50 spots.

More serious complications include:

- Bacterial skin infections
- Flesh-eating disease
- Pneumonia
- Encephalitis
- Other infections (i.e. blood)

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your health care provider or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if any of the following symptoms develop within 3 days of getting the vaccine:

- hives
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness
- high fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- convulsions or seizures

Who should not get Varicella vaccine?

- Anyone who is ill with a fever or infection worse than a common cold.
- People who have had allergic reaction to the vaccine or something in the vaccine.
- Anaphylaxis to chickenpox vaccine
- People with weak immune systems
- People who are taking drugs to suppress their immune system.
- Women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant.
- People who have had chickenpox may not need to get the vaccine. Bloodwork can be done to ensure immunity.
- The chickenpox vaccine can be given on the same day as the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine or at least 28 days apart.

Who should I talk to if I have any more questions?

Talk to your health care provider or call Renfrew County and District Health Unit Health Info Line at **613-735-8666** or **1-800-267-1097 Ext. 666**.

How do I keep track of this vaccination?

After you get any vaccination, make sure your personal immunization record, such as your "Yellow Card", is updated. Keep it in a safe place!

To contact us or for more information	
	613-735-8653 or 1-800-267-1097
	www.rcdhu.com Healthy Living Immunization Immunizations for Children
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Source: Adapted from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care July 2015. Immunization Fact Sheet.

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