



Immunization Action Coalition

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**Chickenpox isn't just an itchy, contagious rash.
Chickenpox can cause serious problems.
Get vaccinated against this disease!**

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What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox, also known as varicella, is a very contagious disease caused by a virus. This virus usually infects children. Older children and adults can also become infected if they haven't already had chickenpox (or been vaccinated against it).



What are the symptoms of chickenpox?

Early symptoms of chickenpox may include aching, fever, and sore throat. Then it turns into a very itchy skin rash that can develop into as many as 400–500 sores.



Older children and adults who are infected usually get much sicker than younger children and are more likely to be hospitalized.



How is chickenpox spread?

Chickenpox is easily spread through the air by sneezing and coughing or through contact with someone's chickenpox sores. If you've never had chickenpox or the vaccine, you can get infected by just being in the same room with someone who has the disease.

How serious is chickenpox?

While most people recover after one week, some do not. Complications of chickenpox can include pneumonia, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), or a severe bacterial infection.

Each year in the United States before vaccine became available, approximately 11,000 people were hospitalized and up to 100 people died from complications of chickenpox.

Who should get chickenpox vaccine?

Many people need to be vaccinated. Children over the age of 12 months who haven't had chickenpox should get vaccinated against this disease. This includes teenagers. Adults who have not had chickenpox should also be vaccinated. Consult your healthcare provider regarding your need for vaccination.

How safe is chickenpox vaccine?

Studies have shown chickenpox vaccine to be safe and



effective. This vaccine has been used since the early 1970s in many areas of the world and studied in the United States since the 1980s. It was licensed for use in the United States in 1995.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all recommend chickenpox vaccine.

Does the vaccine have side effects?

The most common side effects are mild and may include pain and redness at the injection site. Fever and fussiness may also occur. A rash may develop at the site where the shot was given. More serious side effects are rare. Consult your healthcare provider.

How many injections are needed?

Children 12 months through 12 years of age need one injection. People 13 years and older need two doses given four to eight weeks apart.

What if my child gets vaccinated and then still develops chickenpox?

No vaccine is 100% effective so some children might not be fully protected against the disease, even though they have been vaccinated. If they do become infected, however, the disease is usually a mild case and the child will generally have fewer spots, be less likely to have a fever, and recover more quickly.



And here's a friendly reminder for parents!

Adults need vaccinations, too! Call your healthcare provider to find out what vaccinations you need or when your next ones are due. Your children are counting on you to stay healthy!

Everyone needs vaccinations!
If you can't afford shots or don't know where to get them,
contact your city, county, or state health department, or call
(800) 232-2522.

A simple line drawing of a family consisting of a mother, a father, and a young child. The mother is on the right, holding the child. The father is on the left, looking towards the child. They are all smiling.

For more information on chickenpox, visit www.vaccineinformation.org

The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) encourages you to make and distribute copies of this brochure. If you alter it, please acknowledge that it was adapted from IAC. The technical content was reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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