

Chickenpox Vaccine

The chickenpox (varicella) vaccine is part of Yukon children's regular immunization program.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child against chickenpox and its complications. The chickenpox vaccine is recommended for children one year old or over, if they have not had chickenpox.

The chickenpox vaccine is very effective and very safe. In most cases, it causes no adverse reaction.

Chickenpox WILL cause:

- Fever
- Many small blisters that scab
- Itching



Complications may lead to:

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Skin infections (impetigo, cellulitis) — rarely severe
- Encephalitis (brain infection)
- Death



Vaccination against chickenpox may cause:

- Redness and tenderness at injection site
- Fever (10 to 15% of cases)
- Pimples (2 to 5) on the body (less than 5% of cases); not very contagious and heal quickly

To relieve these symptoms:

- Apply a cold, damp compress to the vaccine site.
- Administer acetaminophen-type medication if oral temperature is 38.5°C or higher.
- Cover the lesions and avoid contact with persons at high risk of complications, such as premature babies, until lesions are healed.

Severe allergic reactions are very rare and occur immediately after vaccination. Because the person administering the vaccine can treat such reactions, you should stay on site at least 15 minutes after the vaccine is administered.

Getting your child vaccinated helps protect pregnant women and their unborn children. If a pregnant woman catches chickenpox, her baby may be born with problems, including scars, eye, arm and leg deformities, or brain damage.

The chickenpox virus stays in your body, where it can reactivate years later and cause shingles. Ten to twenty per cent of those who have had chickenpox will later develop shingles. Shingles cause a rash similar to that of chickenpox. The rash follows nerves on the face, chest or abdomen and is very painful. Shingles may cause pain lasting over six months (9 to 35 per cent of cases), most often in those 50 years of age or older. Encephelitis (a brain infection) may also occur.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the staff at the Health Centre in your community.

**Consult your health care provider if side effects persist over 48 hours.
For more information on vaccinations, visit: <http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/>**

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