

Chickenpox (Varicella) Immunization

The **Varicella (chickenpox) immunization** is part of the routine Yukon Children's Immunization Program. This immunization is the best way to protect your child against chickenpox and its complications. For example, two doses of Varicella vaccine are 100% effective at preventing chickenpox.

The Varicella immunization is a two-dose series, usually offered when a child is 1 year of age and then again before your child begins school (4 to 6 years of age).

Chickenpox disease will cause:

- Fever
- Red, itchy blisters that scab

Complications of chickenpox disease may lead to:

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Skin infections i.e. impetigo, cellulitis
- Encephalitis (brain infection)
- Death

Once you get the chickenpox disease, it stays in your body and can reactivate later in life as a disease called Shingles. Shingles causes a similar rash to chickenpox but is very painful and may last up to 6 months. Receiving a vaccine against chickenpox helps prevent this.

Getting immunized also helps protect pregnant women and their unborn children. If a pregnant woman catches chickenpox, her baby may be born with deformities or brain damage.

Possible side effects of the immunization:

Common reactions to the immunization may include redness, tenderness, and swelling at the injection site. Some may develop a fever lasting 1-2 days, or a pimple like rash that is not as contagious and heals quickly.

Side effects of the immunization are easily relieved by: Applying a cold/damp compress to the site, administering acetaminophen or ibuprofen for temperatures 38.5°C or higher. If a pimple like rash develops, cover the rash and avoid contact with persons at high risk of complications until healed (e.g. newborns, elderly and people who are immunocompromised).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization because there is a rare possibility of developing a severe allergic reaction which is treatable at the clinic. This happens to fewer than 1 in 1 million people. If it happens after you leave the clinic, call 911 or the local emergency number.

www.yukonimmunization.ca

