

CHICKENPOX VACCINE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1 Why get vaccinated?

Chickenpox (also called varicella) is a common childhood disease. It is usually mild, but it can be serious, especially in young infants and adults.

- The chickenpox virus can be spread from person to person through the air, or by contact with fluid from chickenpox blisters.
- It causes a rash, itching, fever, and tiredness.
- It can lead to severe skin infection, scars, pneumonia, brain damage, or death.
- A person who has had chickenpox can get a painful rash called shingles years later.
- About 12,000 people are hospitalized for chickenpox each year in the United States.
- About 100 people die each year in the United States as a result of chickenpox.

Chickenpox vaccine can prevent chickenpox.

Most people who get chickenpox vaccine will not get chickenpox. But if someone who has been vaccinated *does* get chickenpox, it is usually very mild. They will have fewer spots, are less likely to have a fever, and will recover faster.

2 Who should get chickenpox vaccine and when?

- ✓ **Children should get 1 dose of chickenpox vaccine between 12 and 18 months of age, or at any age after that if they have never had chickenpox.**

People who do not get the vaccine until 13 years of age or older should get **2 doses**, 4-8 weeks apart.

Ask your doctor or nurse for details.

Chickenpox vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

3

Some people should not get chickenpox vaccine or should wait

- People should not get chickenpox vaccine if they have ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to **gelatin**, the antibiotic **neomycin**, or (for those needing a second dose) a **previous dose of chickenpox vaccine**.
- People who are moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should usually wait until they recover before getting chickenpox vaccine.
- Pregnant women should wait to get chickenpox vaccine until after they have given birth. Women should not get pregnant for 1 month after getting chickenpox vaccine.
- Some people should check with their doctor about whether they should get chickenpox vaccine, including anyone who:
 - Has HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system
 - Is being treated with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids, for 2 weeks or longer
 - Has any kind of cancer
 - Is taking cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs
- People who recently had a transfusion or were given other blood products should ask their doctor when they may get chickenpox vaccine.

Ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

