

# **Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine**

Vaccine Information Leaflet

## **What is the Varicella Vaccine Used For?**

Varicella vaccines help to prevent chickenpox, which is a highly infectious disease caused by the Varicella-Zoster Virus (VZV).

Chickenpox spreads from one person to another through direct contact or via droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread indirectly through objects freshly contaminated by droplets or fluid from the blisters of an infected person.

Common symptoms of chickenpox include a fever, with red itchy spots on the body and face. The spots appear over a few days, become fluid-filled blisters and form crusts before healing.

## **Who Should Receive the Varicella Vaccine?**

As part of the Singapore National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS), all children should receive two doses from age 12 months onwards, at least 3 months apart.

As part of the Singapore National Adult Immunisation Schedule (NAIS), adults (18 years or older) who have not been previously vaccinated, or lack evidence of past infection or immunity should receive 2 doses (1st dose, followed by 2nd dose within four to eight weeks of the 1st dose).

## **What Precautions Should I Follow Before Receiving the Varicella Vaccine?**

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this vaccine or any of the other ingredients of this vaccine, including Neomycin antibiotic
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding
- You are taking any other medications
- You are currently not feeling well and having a fever
- You have a weak immune system due to an illness such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection or cancer
- You are currently on treatment or on medications that may weaken your immune system(e.g. high dose steroids)
- You have recently received any other vaccines
- You have recently received a blood transfusion

## **How Is the Varicella Vaccine Given?**

It is given by an injection underneath the skin, as a series of two doses under the NCIS and the NAIS.

It may be given on its own as one shot, or in combination with other vaccines (e.g. Measles, Mumps and Rubella) as one shot.

## **What Are Some Common Side Effects of the Varicella Vaccine?**

- Some people may feel faint after the vaccination
  - Sit for 15 minutes to avoid fainting
- Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
  - You may place a cold compress over the affected area for relief
  - You may take paracetamol for pain relief
- Fever
  - You may take paracetamol to treat the fever

Please see a doctor if these side effects do not get better or become worse.

## What Are Some Rare But Serious Side Effects That I Need to Seek Medical Advice Immediately?

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should inform your healthcare professional immediately.

### Disclaimers

The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

*This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.*

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