

## ► Chickenpox Vaccine



*"Vaccination is good protection"*

This vaccine protects you against chickenpox and its complications. Chickenpox is a very contagious disease caused by a virus. This virus stays in your body, where it can reactivate years later and cause shingles. Ten to twenty percent of those who have had chickenpox will later develop shingles.

### DISEASES

#### Chickenpox causes:

- Fever
- Many small blisters that develop scabs
- Itching

#### Possible complications of chickenpox include:

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Skin infections (impetigo, cellulitis)
- Serious streptococcus group A infection ("flesh-eating disease")
- Encephalitis (a brain infection)
- Death

**Adults experience more complications than children.**

If a pregnant woman catches chickenpox, her baby may be born with problems, including scars, eye, arm and leg deformities, or brain damage.

Shingles cause a rash similar to those 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% of cases), most often in those 50 or over. Encephalitis (a brain infection) may also occur.

## The Vaccine

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against chickenpox and its complications. The vaccine is recommended for 1 year olds and 5 years olds who have never had chickenpox. You are less likely to get shingles if you have been vaccinated against chickenpox.

The chickenpox vaccine is safe. In most cases, it does not cause any undesirable reactions. Women who have been vaccinated should not become pregnant for a month after their vaccination.

Inform your health care provider if your child has an allergy to any vaccine or latex or has a weakened immune system.

### EFFECTS

#### Possible side effects

- You may experience tenderness or redness around the injection site (20% of cases).
- You may run a fever (10% to 15% of cases)
- In the weeks after vaccination, fewer than 5% of people will develop chickenpox-like sores (2 to 5) at the injection site or elsewhere on the body. These lesions are not very contagious and heal quickly.

#### What to do

- Apply a cold, damp cloth to the injection site.
- Take a fever medication such as acetaminophen if your temperature is 38.5°C or over.
- Cover the lesions. If you cannot, avoid contact while the lesions are present with persons at high risk of complications, such as premature newborns and those with weakened immune systems.

Severe allergic reactions are very rare.

Should a severe allergic reaction occur, it would begin immediately and the person who gave the vaccine will be able to treat it. That's why you should stay on site for at least 15 minutes after the vaccination.

For more information, ask the person who gave you the vaccine or another health care provider.