



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
Henderson County, NC

# Chickenpox (Varicella)

## What You Should Know

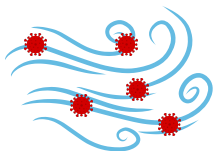
### Chickenpox is Caused by the Varicella-zoster Virus

#### Symptoms:

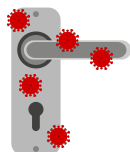
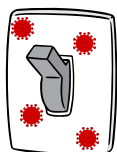
- A blister-like rash
- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite



### Chickenpox Spreads Easily



#### Through the Air



#### On Surfaces

People can spread chickenpox 1-2 days before the rash starts. They stay contagious until all blisters have scabbed over.

### Getting Vaccinated is the Best Way to Prevent Chickenpox

#### Unvaccinated people should:

Avoid people who have chickenpox and areas with outbreaks.

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water.



### Chickenpox Can Be Serious for People Who Are:



- Infants
- Pregnant
- Teens
- Living with a weakened immune system
- Adults

Chickenpox can cause serious problems like infections of the brain or lungs.

If these people are exposed to chickenpox, call a healthcare provider right away.

### Unvaccinated and Exposed? Get vaccinated within 3-5 days to help prevent or reduce illness.

#### If you get sick:

- Rest
- Drink Fluids
- Treat fever and discomfort
- Never give aspirin to children



## When should people get chickenpox (varicella) vaccine?

In North Carolina, children and students need the varicella vaccine to attend child care, K–12 schools, and colleges.

For younger children, the doses are usually:

- **One dose between ages 12 and 15 months.**
- **A booster at age 4 to 6 years, before starting school.**

Students starting college in North Carolina need at least one dose of the vaccine. If they missed it, they will need to get vaccinated. Students entering college born before April 1, 2001, do not have to get the vaccine.

Children who have had a documented case of chickenpox may not need the vaccine. Their doctor should send a note to the school, draw blood to verify immunity, or talk with the school nurse.

## What are the side effects of a chickenpox vaccine?

Most people don't have any side effects from the vaccine. If side effects happen, they most often include soreness, redness or swelling where the vaccine is given, or mild fever or rash.

## Why do we need the chickenpox vaccine?

The varicella vaccine protects against chickenpox, a disease that causes bumps and blisters. It spreads very easily. Many children recover without problems, but sometimes it can be very serious. It can cause infections of the lungs and brain.

Before the vaccine, one or two children in the United States died each week from chickenpox. Most of these children were otherwise healthy.

## Should teenagers and adults get the varicella vaccine?

Any teenager or adult who has not had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine should receive the vaccine. Adults are 10 times more likely than children to be hospitalized with severe consequences of chickenpox.

Anyone born before 1980, is assumed to have had chicken pox and therefore immune, so unless you believe you did not have the illness, you do not need the vaccine.

## Where can my child get a chickenpox vaccine?

Your child can get a chickenpox vaccine at the health department, your healthcare provider, or a pharmacy.

## Is there medication for chickenpox?

Most people who get chickenpox will only need to treat fever and discomfort. Never give aspirin to children.

Some people are at high risk for serious illness from chickenpox: infants, teens, adults, and those who are pregnant or have a weakened immune system. If these people are exposed to chickenpox, call a healthcare provider right away. The healthcare provider may decide post exposure treatment may be necessary.



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