

# *Varicella (Chickenpox)*

## **What is Varicella?**

- Varicella, also known as chickenpox, is a contagious disease that causes an itchy rash of blisters.
- A person with chickenpox may have as many as 500 blisters.
- The rash can spread over the whole body.
- Chickenpox can be serious and life-threatening, especially to babies, adolescents, adults, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems.

## **What are the symptoms?**

- The most common symptom of chickenpox is the itchy rash of blisters that can appear all over the body.
- Other symptoms can occur 1-2 days before the rash appears.
- Those symptoms include:
  - Fever
  - Headache
  - Feeling tired
  - Decreased appetite

## **How does Chickenpox spread?**

- Chickenpox spreads easily, by having direct contact with a person with the disease.
- It can spread by touching the blisters of a person who has chickenpox.
- It can also spread through tiny droplets that get into the air when someone who has chickenpox breathes or talks.
- Chickenpox can spread as early as 1 to 2 days before the infected person's rash appears to until all the blisters have formed scabs.

## **Where can I find more information?**

- Ask your doctor, or contact your local county health department
- Email the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at [immunization@adph.state.al.us](mailto:immunization@adph.state.al.us)
- Go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type 'Varicella' in the SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health

Immunization Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104

1-800-469-4599 [www.adph.org/imm](http://www.adph.org/imm) 2/29/16

# *Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine*

## **Who should get the Chickenpox vaccine?**

- Children who have never had chickenpox should get 2 doses of the chickenpox vaccine at these ages:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Dose: 12-15 months of age
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Dose: 4-6 years of age (may be given earlier, but must be at least 3 months after the 1<sup>st</sup> dose)
- People 13 years of age and older (who have never had chickenpox or received chickenpox vaccine) should get 2 doses at least 28 days apart.
- Children, adolescents, and young adults who have only received one dose should receive a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose as well.

## **What are the side effects and risks?**

- A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, or a severe allergic reaction. The risk of the chickenpox vaccine causing serious harm or death is extremely small.
- Most common side effects include:
  - Soreness or swelling where the shot was given
  - Fever
  - Mild rash

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