

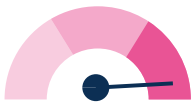
UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Getting Chickenpox vs. Getting Vaccinated



We all want to make the best health choices for our children. So how risky is chickenpox compared to the vaccines that prevent chickenpox?

CHICKENPOX FAST FACTS



HOW CONTAGIOUS?

Extremely contagious. 9 out of 10 people who are not immune can get sick from an infected person.¹



HOW SERIOUS?

Typically mild to moderate.

But serious complications can include:

Hospitalization: 1–2 in 1,000 healthy children²

Encephalitis (swelling of the brain): 1 in 50,000 in unvaccinated children²

Cerebellar ataxia (uncoordinated movement and fatigue from brain damage): 1 in 4,000 in unvaccinated children²

Birth defects: 1 in 50 babies whose mothers get chickenpox in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy³

Death: 1 in 100,000 children (ages 1–14) and 6 in 100,000 teens (ages 15–19).² Babies whose mothers have chickenpox days before or after delivery have a 3 in 10 chance of getting chickenpox. 30% of these babies will die if not properly treated.³



Chickenpox complications can be life-threatening to infants.¹

VACCINE FAST FACTS



HOW EFFECTIVE?

More than 90% effective at preventing chickenpox with 2 doses.⁴



HOW SAFE?

Severe allergic reactions are rare, generally occurring in less than 1 dose out of every million.⁵



SAFETY RECORDS

Chickenpox vaccines have been in use in the United States since 1995. In the first 25 years they were given, they prevented around 91 million cases, 238,000 hospitalizations, and 2,000 deaths.^{6,7}



MYTH BUSTER

Is natural immunity better than vaccine immunity? No. Even children who get a mild case of chickenpox are at a higher risk of shingles later in life than those who are vaccinated.⁸



Five separate safety systems continuously monitor all vaccines for as long as the vaccines are given.⁹

Learn more at hhs.gov/immunization/basics/safety/index.html.

COMPARING THE TWO

CHICKENPOX

VACCINES TO PREVENT CHICKENPOX

Common Mild to Moderate Symptoms and Common Side Effects^{2,10,11}

Common symptoms of chickenpox last about a week and can include:

- Itchy, blistering rash
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Headache

Common side effects of vaccines to prevent chickenpox are usually mild and last 2–3 days. If side effects occur, they can include:

- Soreness, swelling, and redness where the vaccine was given
- Fever
- Mild rash

Rare, More Serious Symptoms or Complications and Rare Side Effects^{10,11,12}

Serious symptoms or complications of chickenpox vary and can include:

- Bacterial infections
- Pneumonia
- Central nervous system complications
- Reye's syndrome (swelling of the liver and brain)
- Encephalitis (swelling of the brain)
- Bleeding problems
- Sepsis (life-threatening extreme reaction to an infection)

Serious side effects of vaccines to prevent chickenpox vary and can include:

- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Rash
- Swollen glands (uncommon, affecting 1 in 100 people)

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/about>
2. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-children/about>
3. Stanford Medicine Children's Health: <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=chickenpox-varicella-and-pregnancy-90-P02161>
4. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/vaccines/index.html>
5. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/vaccines/varicella.html>
6. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/vaccination-impact/infographic.html>
7. Journal of Infectious Diseases: https://academic.oup.com/jid/article/226/Supplement_4/S375/6764810
8. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/hcp/clinical-overview/index.html>
9. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov/immunization/basics/safety/index.html>
10. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/signs-symptoms>
11. University of Oxford: <https://vaccineknowledge.ox.ac.uk/chickenpox-varicella-vaccine#Safety-and-side-effects>
12. Mayo Clinic: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/reyes-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20377255>