

Varicella vaccine is a live attenuated vaccine – it is important you familiarise yourself with the contraindications and precautions for this vaccine in the Immunisation Handbook 2017.

Who is eligible from 1 July 2017?

- » **Children born on/after 1 April 2016** are eligible to receive one funded varicella vaccine dose when they turn 15 months of age.
 - » Children who have had varicella disease prior to 15 months (determined by clinical history, serology is **NOT** required) do not require this immunisation.
- » **Children born on/after 01 July 2006** who have not had varicella immunisation or disease (determined by clinical history, serology is **NOT** required) are eligible to receive one funded varicella vaccine dose at 11 years of age.
 - » This will be available through general practice, not through the school base immunisation program.
- » **Special groups** – two funded varicella vaccine doses will continue to be available for infants, children and adults who meet the eligibility criteria for one of the ‘special groups’ described in the Pharmaceutical Schedule.
- » Funded varicella vaccine must be ordered through ProPharma.

Is a child born before 1 April 2016 eligible for a funded varicella vaccine dose?

Not until 11 years of age as above, and then only if they have not had varicella immunisation or disease (determined by clinical history, serology is **NOT** required).

If parents would like their child to receive varicella vaccine before that time, the vaccine is available for purchase (prescribed by the doctor and ordered from HCL).

Is a child born before 1 July 2006 eligible for a funded varicella vaccine dose?

Not unless they meet the eligibility criteria for one of the ‘special groups’ as above. If parents would like their child to receive varicella vaccine, the vaccine is available for purchase (prescribed by the doctor and ordered from HCL).

Can the funded 15 month varicella vaccine dose be given from 12 months of age?

Yes. Children born on/after 1 April 2016 could have the 15 month varicella vaccine dose from 12 months of age along with the 15 month MMR, pneumococcal and Hib vaccines at a parent’s request.

Can we give the 15 month funded varicella vaccine dose before 12 months of age?

No. If parents would like their child to receive varicella vaccine before 12 months of age, the vaccine is available for purchase (prescribed by the doctor and ordered from HCL).

Children who receive a purchased varicella vaccine dose before 12 months of age will be eligible to receive a 15 month funded dose.

Can we catch up an overdue 15 month funded varicella vaccine dose?

Yes, if the child was born on/after 1 April 2016.

Can we give the 11 year funded varicella vaccine dose before 11 years of age?

No. The funded varicella vaccine dose due at 11 years of age cannot be administered to eligible children prior to turning 11 years of age.

Does a past varicella vaccine dose need to be documented to be counted?

Yes. In the absence of an immunisation record, vaccinate.

How do we determine whether a child has had varicella disease?

We rely on clinical history. Parental recall of varicella disease or characteristic rash is sufficient. Do **NOT** do serology. If the history is uncertain, vaccinate.

Does a child who has had varicella disease need to receive varicella vaccine?

No, even a child who has had a mild case of varicella disease does not require the varicella vaccine.

Can we catch up an overdue 11 year funded varicella vaccine dose?

Yes, if the child was born on/after 1 July 2006 and they have not had varicella immunisation or disease (determined by clinical history, serology is **NOT** required).

Is varicella vaccine funded for a child exposed to someone with varicella disease?

Only if the child meets the eligibility criteria described earlier.

Varicella vaccine is available for purchase (prescribed by the doctor and ordered from HCL) and may be used for post-exposure prophylaxis in individuals from 9 months of age to prevent illness or modify severity if used within 3 days, possibly up to 5 days, of exposure.

Can we give varicella vaccine to a child who is immune suppressed (either through a medical condition or medication)?

Varicella vaccine is a live attenuated vaccine. Further medical advice **MUST** be sought before administering live vaccines to any immune suppressed child.

Can varicella vaccine be given to a child living with a newborn baby, pregnant woman or person who is immune suppressed?

Yes. Up to five in 100 vaccinees could develop a vaccine related rash post-immunisation. It is extremely rare for an individual with a vaccine related rash to transfer the vaccine virus to another person. A vaccinee who develops a rash should avoid contact with a susceptible person. If this is not possible, the susceptible person should seek medical advice.

How effective is varicella vaccine?

One dose confers approximately 99% protection against severe disease and 80% protection against varicella disease of any severity. Breakthrough disease is usually mild.

What is the duration of protection?

Varicella protection is long-term but may not be life-long. Exposure to chickenpox disease in the community is expected to boost immunity. In the future, a booster dose of vaccine may be recommended.

Do children require one or two doses of varicella vaccine?

One dose gives good protection, two doses give optimal protection.

- » Children who receive a varicella vaccine dose under 12 months of age should receive a second dose after 12 months of age because of possible maternal antibody interference with the child’s own immune response to the vaccine dose.
- » Parents of children who are eligible to receive one varicella vaccine can choose to purchase a second dose of non-funded varicella vaccine for their child.

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Do children require one or two doses of varicella vaccine?

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- » The second non-funded varicella vaccine dose (prescribed by the doctor and ordered from HCL) can be administered a minimum of 4 weeks before or after the funded dose.
- » Children aged 13 years or older, and adults require two doses of varicella vaccine.

Are we giving four injections at the 15 month immunisation visit?

Yes. The recommendation is for the child to receive all four injections at the 15 month immunisation visit.

Note – MMR and varicella vaccines are both live vaccines. If not given on the same day, live vaccines must be given a minimum of 4 weeks apart.

Why are we not using the combination MMRV vaccine?

This vaccine is not available in New Zealand. Studies have shown children given combination MMRV vaccine were significantly more likely to develop fever or vaccine related rash than children who received concurrent but separate MMR and varicella (MMR+V) vaccines as their first dose/s.

Does receiving varicella vaccine decrease the risk of shingles (herpes zoster) later in life?

The risk of zoster (shingles) is lower and the clinical severity milder in healthy vaccinees than in children who get varicella disease.

Does varicella vaccine contain an antibiotic?

Yes, Varilrix contains neomycin. Varicella vaccine should NOT be given to an individual with known anaphylaxis or systemic hypersensitivity to neomycin.

Does varicella vaccine contain human blood products?

No.

Does varicella vaccine contain egg products?

No.