

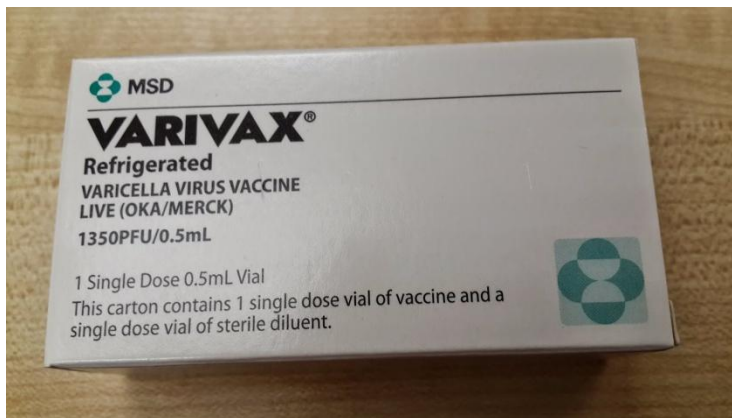
# Varicella (chickenpox) Vaccine

## What is Varicella?



- Varicella (chickenpox) is a very contagious disease caused by varicella zoster virus (VZV)
- Symptoms include itchy blister-like rash, lethargy and fever and can be complicated in babies, adults and people with weakened immune systems.

## What is Varivax?



- Varivax is a live attenuated vaccine licenced by the FDA in 1995 to protect people from chickenpox, has been certified to be safe and has been given to millions of people worldwide.
- Studies show that 1 dose of the vaccine is 85% effective while the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose will boost its effectiveness up to 98%.

- The vaccine is almost 100% effective in preventing severe cases of chickenpox that often end up with hospitalization and even death.

### How is Varivax given?

- 2 doses (0.5ml each) of the vaccine need to be given via subcutaneous injections
- Recommended vaccination schedule:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> dose: 12 – 15 months old
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> dose: 4 – 6 years old
- Do not worry if you have missed the recommended schedule
  - If age <13 years old: 2 doses should be given ≥3 months apart
  - If age >13 years old: 2 doses should be given 4 – 8 weeks apart



### Who should be vaccinated?



- Healthcare professionals
- People who work around immunocompromised people
- Teachers or child care workers
- Nursing home staffs
- Adults living with children
- International travelers
- Anybody who has not contracted chicken pox before and not vaccinated before

## How long am I protected?

- Protection against VZV infection is at least 10 – 20 years and likely to be lifelong in most cases.

## Who is not suitable to be vaccinated?

- Previous history of allergic reaction to gelatin, neomycin or any other component of the vaccine.
- Malignancies of the bone marrow or lymphatic system.
- Concurrent high dose systemic steroids or immunosuppressive therapy
- Congenital hereditary immunodeficiency
- Concurrent moderate or severe illness
- Recently received blood, plasma or immune globulin products within 3 – 11 months ago depending on dosage
- Is or may be pregnant

## Does Varivax protect against shingles?

- Shingles occur when a dormant infection by VZV gets reactivated later in life.
- Anyone who has been exposed to VZV will have a dormant VZV infection and thus be at risk for shingles later in life.
- Varivax protects against chickenpox but has a small chance of causing the development of shingles later in life.
- The risk of getting shingles from vaccine-strain VZV after chickenpox vaccination is much lower than getting shingles after natural infection with wild-type VZV.