

Children's Health Update

Not Everything Your Child Needs For School Is In His Or Her Backpack

(NAPSA)—Before the beginning of a new school year, parents can help their kids prepare for their first day by taking them to get paper, pencils and notebooks. But school supplies aren't the only things that children need before they go back to school. This is also the time to schedule your child's back-to-school wellness checkup. While at the health care provider's office, make sure that your child is caught up on all recommended vaccinations for school to help protect against a number of diseases, including chickenpox.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) includes the chickenpox vaccine on its list of recommended vaccines for school-age children. While requirements may vary from state to state, many states require chickenpox vaccination for school attendance. The CDC currently recommends that all appropriate individuals who have had one dose of the chickenpox vaccine get a second dose.

Data from a CDC survey showed that just one-third of adolescents 13 to 17 years of age without a history of disease had received both recommended doses of the chickenpox vaccine.

"Chickenpox is a disease that can be easily spread among children," said Keith S. Reisinger, M.D., MPH, a pediatrician in Pittsburgh, Pa. and medical director of Primary Physicians Research. "Vaccination is an effective way to help protect against the disease, and the back-to-school period is an ideal time to make sure children are caught up on appropriate vaccinations. During the back-to-school visit, parents can check with their children's health care provider about their children's



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Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease. As some parents may remember from their childhood, the most common symptoms of chickenpox are rash, fever, headache and general discomfort. Although usually mild, chickenpox can sometimes lead to less common but serious complications, such as pneumonia.

The chickenpox vaccine, known as VARIVAX® (Varicella Virus Vaccine Live), helps prevent chickenpox in individuals 12 months of age and older.

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VARIVAX is given as a shot to people who are 12 months old or older. If your child is 12 months to 12 years old and your doctor gives a second dose, the second dose must be given at least 3 months after the first shot.

A second dose should be given to those who first get the vaccine when they are 13 years old or older. This second dose should be given 4 to 8 weeks after the first dose.

The implementation of a chickenpox vaccination program has significantly reduced the frequency and severity of chickenpox

in the U.S. Since it is better to help prevent a disease than to treat it, parents should talk to their child's doctor to make sure they receive the appropriate vaccines on time.

Your doctor or health care provider will use the official recommendations to decide the number of shots needed and when to get them. For a complete 2010 vaccination schedule, visit the CDC's Web site at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm.

Important Information About VARIVAX

Your child should not get VARIVAX if he or she is allergic to any of its ingredients, including gelatin and neomycin; has a weakened immune system, such as an immune deficiency, an inherited immune disorder, leukemia, lymphoma or HIV/AIDS; takes high doses of steroids by mouth or in a shot; has active tuberculosis that is not treated; has a fever; is pregnant or plans to get pregnant within the next three months.

Your child should not take aspirin or aspirin-containing products for 6 weeks after getting VARIVAX.

VARIVAX may not protect everyone who gets it. VARIVAX does not treat chickenpox once your child has it.

The most common side effects are fever; pain, swelling, itching or redness at the site of the shot; chickenpox like rash on the body or at the site of the shot; irritability. Your doctor has a more complete list of side effects for VARIVAX.

Prescribing information and patient product information for VARIVAX are available at www.MerckVaccines.com.

This information is sponsored by Merck.