

Varicella

This information is a supplement to [Pharmacists & Publicly Funded Vaccines in B.C.—General Information](#).

Pharmacist Access Criteria

Publicly funded varicella vaccine can be requested under the following circumstances:

- For eligible B.C. residents on a case-by-case basis when the pharmacist can administer the vaccine in the timeliest manner, and
- For eligible B.C. residents as a supplement to the school-based program on a case-by-case basis.

Individuals whose immune status may be suppressed as a result of disease or therapy should be referred to public health for vaccination. A written referral from an appropriate physician is required for administration of varicella vaccine. Refer to the BCCDC Immunization Manual [Section III-Immunization of Special Populations](#) for more information.

For patients who meet public health eligibility criteria, this publicly funded vaccination is available at no charge to the patient. PharmaCare will pay a \$10 fee to the pharmacy for administering this injection to a person aged 5 years and older (as per [College of Pharmacists of BC Standards, Limits and Conditions](#)).

Other B.C. residents may purchase varicella vaccine and may pay to have the vaccine administered by an authorized pharmacist. Vaccine costs, including administration supplies and services, are paid for by individuals out of pocket. Selected private drug plans may also cover vaccine costs.

Products

The publicly funded varicella vaccines that are currently used in BC are Varivax® III and Varilrix®.

The publicly funded varicella vaccines that are part of the publicly funded [school-based program](#) in B.C. are Varivax® III and Varilrix®.

For specific information about varicella vaccines, refer to the individual product monographs in the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) Immunization Manual [Section VII – Biological Products](#).

There are no data on the interchangeability of Varivax® III and Varilrix®. However there is no biological reason to assume inferiority and the use of a different product for the second dose may be necessary for programmatic reasons.

Patient Eligibility

Current recommendations and patient eligibility criteria for publicly funded varicella vaccines are provided within the individual product monographs in the BCCDC Immunization Manual [Section VII – Biological Products](#).

Only susceptible people need to be immunized.

A varicella-susceptible individual is someone with:

- a history of varicella disease at < 12 months of age, or
- no history of varicella disease at > 12 months of age, or
- no history of herpes zoster, and no history of completion of age-appropriate varicella immunization.

Note: A self-reported history of chickenpox occurring at ≥ 12 months of age confers immunity.

Those who meet susceptibility criteria and are ≥ 13 years old should be tested by a serological test for varicella IgG before immunizing (as most will be immune from prior subclinical infection).

Please refer these individuals to a family physician so that serology testing can be done prior to immunization.

Note: The eligibility criteria for publicly funded varicella vaccine in BC are established by the [BCCDC](#) and may differ from those of the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI).

Varicella – Adults and Others

Publicly funded varicella vaccine is suitable for pharmacist administration to eligible B.C. residents on a case by case basis when the pharmacist can administer the vaccine in the timeliest manner.

Varicella – School-Based Program for Children

If a request comes in to the pharmacy to administer a varicella vaccine to a person eligible to receive it as part of the school-based program, the pharmacist should contact the local health unit to review the case and arrange for vaccine product to be released if appropriate.

Special Considerations

Contraindications and Precautions

Administration of varicella vaccine should be deferred if there is any severe acute illness. However, immunization should not be delayed because of minor acute illness, with or without fever.

Pregnancy is a contraindication. Women of childbearing age should avoid pregnancy for 1 month following vaccination. If a pregnant woman is inadvertently vaccinated, or becomes pregnant in the month following vaccination it should be reported to the company.

Those ≤ 18 years of age should avoid taking salicylates for 6 weeks following immunization.

Recent administration of an immune globulin preparation or blood product is contraindicated, as these products can interfere with the immune response to a varicella containing vaccine. For more detailed information and guidance on timing intervals please refer to the [Immune Globulin Preparations or Blood: Timing Intervals for Vaccines Containing Live Measles, Mumps, Rubella, or Varicella Virus](#) section of the BCCDC Immunization Manual: Section VII – Biological Products.

Documentation

Reporting of administration of varicella vaccine for Grade 6 students as part of the publicly funded [school-based program](#) is recommended and encouraged. Documentation details are available from the [local health unit](#).