

Immunization Program Change – Varicella Two-Dose Schedule

Frequently Asked Questions by Health Professionals Version 4

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND	2
COMMON QUESTIONS BY HEALTH PROFESSION	2
GENERAL	2
<u>Q1.</u> Why is this immunization program change being made?	2
<u>Q2.</u> When will the varicella two-dose schedule start?	3
ELIGIBILITY:	3
<u>Q3.</u> Are children born on or after August 1, 2005 who have had their preschool immunizations eligible for a second dose of varicella vaccine?	3
<u>Q4.</u> Is there an expectation that children in grade 1 will routinely be offered a second dose of varicella vaccine?	3
<u>Q5.</u> Are children born before August 1, 2005 and less than 13 years of age eligible for a second dose of varicella vaccine?	3
<u>Q6.</u> Where can vaccine be accessed for children born before August 1, 2005 and less than 13 years of age who are not eligible for provincially funded vaccine?	4
SAFETY:	4
<u>Q7.</u> What is the recommended follow-up if PRIORIX-TETRA® is given to persons 13 years of age and older?	4
REFERENCE LIST	5

BACKGROUND:

Beginning August 1, 2012 Alberta Health (AH) is introducing a second dose of varicella vaccine into the Alberta routine childhood immunization schedule. Eligibility will be based on date of birth – all children born on or after August 1, 2005 will be eligible to receive a second dose of varicella vaccine. The second dose of varicella vaccine will be administered at the preschool immunization appointment. Implementing a second dose of varicella vaccine to these children will reduce the incidence of varicella disease in children five to nine years of age and it is anticipated longer.

Beginning August 1, 2012 two doses of PRIORIX-TETRA® a combined measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine (MMRV) will be offered to susceptible children at the 12 month immunization visit and at 4 to 6 years of age at the preschool immunization visit.

PRIORIX-TETRA® may be used for children who are 12 months of age up to and including 12 years of age¹ who require measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) and varicella vaccines at the same appointment.

Two doses of varicella vaccine will continue to be recommended for susceptible individuals 13 years of age and older based on the existing provincial varicella immunization program guidelines. Individuals in this age group requiring varicella vaccine should be offered the varicella univalent vaccine.

COMMON QUESTIONS BY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:

The following information has been provided to answer questions health care professionals may have regarding the immunization program change to a varicella two-dose schedule and the provision of a second dose of varicella vaccine for children four to six years of age as part of the routine childhood immunization program in Alberta.

GENERAL:

Q1. Why is this immunization program change being made?

A1. The Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization (AACI) recommended a second dose of varicella vaccine for preschool children to reduce the incidence of varicella disease specifically in children five to nine years of age. This is consistent with national recommendations for varicella immunization programs and the anticipation that introducing a two dose varicella immunization program will further reduce varicella (both wild-type and break through) disease incidence, increase herd immunity, potentially decrease disease outbreaks as well as minimize the number of cases occurring in adolescents and adults even with the anticipated shift to a higher mean age for varicella disease in a highly vaccinated population. (See the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) Varicella Vaccination Two-Dose Recommendation)².

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/10vol36/acs-8/index-eng.php>

Q2. When will the varicella two-dose schedule start?

A2. The program start date will be August 1, 2012. Children born on or after August 1, 2005, presenting for their preschool immunization appointment will be offered measles, mumps, rubella and varicella combined vaccine (PRIORIX-TETRA®) as the second dose for both MMR and varicella vaccines.

ELIGIBILITY:

Q3. Are children born on or after August 1, 2005 who have had their preschool immunizations eligible for a second dose of varicella vaccine?

A3. Children born on or after August 1, 2005 who have already received their preschool immunizations including a second dose of MMR vaccine, but who did not receive a second dose of varicella vaccine, may be accommodated if they present to public health. These children will not be offered the univalent varicella vaccine routinely in the school setting.

Q4. Is there an expectation that children in grade 1 will routinely be offered a second dose of varicella vaccine?

A4. No. Children in grade 1 who have received their preschool immunizations including a second dose of MMR vaccine will not be offered a second dose of varicella vaccine in the school setting.

- If the child is born on or after August 1, 2005 and the parent requests the second dose of varicella vaccine they may be accommodated through public health at a well child clinic.
- Children born on or after August 1, 2005 who have not received their preschool immunizations and are being assessed for childhood immunizations (e.g., DTaP-IPV, PCV13, second dose MMR) would be eligible for a second dose of varicella vaccine as well. This would be offered as measles, mumps, rubella and varicella combined vaccine (PRIORIX-TETRA®).

Q5. Are children born before August 1, 2005 and less than 13 years of age eligible for a second dose of varicella vaccine?

A5. No. Children born before August 1, 2005 who have not received a second dose of varicella vaccine are not eligible.

- Children born before August 1, 2005 who are delayed for immunizations or new to region and less than 12 years of age would not be eligible for a second dose of varicella vaccine.
- These children will be eligible for:
 - Two doses of MMR vaccine
 - One dose of varicella vaccine

Q6. Where can vaccine be accessed for children born before August 1, 2005 and less than 13 years of age who are not eligible for provincially funded vaccine?

A6. Individuals who are immunized with a single dose of varicella vaccine and are not eligible for a second dose under the current guidelines have the option to purchase the vaccine.

Guidelines for purchasing vaccine through AHS are determined at the zone level. Staff should refer to their zone guidelines for information on accessing paid varicella vaccine. Individuals also have the option of purchasing the varicella vaccine through their physician or pharmacist.

SAFETY

Q7. What is the recommended follow-up if PRIORIX-TETRA® is given to persons 13 years of age and older?

A7. PRIORIX-TETRA® is not licensed for use in persons 13 years of age and older and should not be used in the age group. Limited data is available on the efficacy of this vaccine in persons 13 years of age and older.

Based on consultation with AHS Medical Officers of Health the following is recommended if the vaccine is inadvertently administered to a person 13 years of age or older:

The MMR portion of the combined vaccine can be considered valid and would not need to be repeated. The varicella component of the vaccine would not be considered valid and would need to be repeated using univalent varicella vaccine with a 3 month interval from the invalid dose of MMR-Var that was administered.

Additional doses of MMR or varicella vaccine, if needed, should be given according to intervals outlined in the vaccine biological pages.

Reference List

- ¹ GlaxoSmithKline Inc. (2011, July 5). PRIORIX-TETRA®: Combined measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine, live, attenuated. Product monograph.
- ² National Advisory Committee on Immunization, (2010, September). Varicella Vaccination Two-Dose Recommendations. *Canada Communicable Disease Report, Volume 36, ACS-8*.
- ³ National Advisory Committee on Immunization. (2012). *Canadian immunization guide (Evergreen Edition)*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada.
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/>
- ⁴ Alberta Health, Health System Accountability and Performance Division, Alberta Immunization Policy (2014, April 17). *Measles, Mumps, Rubella Combined Vaccines and Varicella Vaccines*