



# Naugatuck Valley Health District

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Ansonia Beacon Falls Derby Naugatuck Seymour Shelton

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## HEALTH ADVISORY

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### NAUGATUCK VALLEY HEALTH DISTRICT URGES RESIDENTS TO GET VACCINATED FOR VARICELLA

There has been an increase in varicella (more commonly called Chickenpox) activity in the Valley area. Chickenpox is a very contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). If one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected. **Chickenpox can also be serious, even life-threatening**, especially in babies, adolescents, adults, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

**The best way to prevent chickenpox is to get the chickenpox vaccine.** Chickenpox vaccine became available in the United States in 1995. Everyone—including children, adolescents, and adults—should get two doses of chickenpox vaccine if they have never had chickenpox or were never vaccinated.

“Vaccination remains the most effective preventive measure against varicella. The varicella vaccine is safe, proven to be 90% effective, and can significantly reduce the severity of the disease. For patients that are not vaccinated, it is important for them to be educated on the risk infection and to monitor for community outbreaks,” said Dr. Frederick A. Browne, M.D., an Infectious Disease Physician and Medical Advisor to the Naugatuck Valley Health District.

NVHD is urging parents to get their children vaccinated based on the CDC’s Recommended Immunization Schedule.

#### Children under 13 years old:

- The first dose is recommended at 12 through 15 months old.
- The second dose is recommended at 4 through 6 years old.

*\*The second dose may be given at an earlier age if it is given at least 3 months after the first dose.*

#### People 13 years of age and older who

have never had chickenpox or received chickenpox vaccine should get two doses, at least 28 days apart.

Resources for getting vaccinated: Contact your healthcare provider or call your local health department. Naugatuck Valley Health District has varicella (chickenpox) vaccine available for those 2 years and older. **Please call Nurse Kristie to schedule an appointment at (203) 881-3255 x107.**

Anyone who has not had chickenpox or gotten the chickenpox vaccine can get the disease. Chickenpox illness usually lasts about 4 to 7 days. The **classic symptom of chickenpox is a rash that turns into itchy, fluid-filled blisters that eventually turn into scabs.** The rash may first show up on the chest, back, and face, and then spread over the entire body, including inside the mouth, eyelids, or genital area. It usually takes about one week for all of the blisters to become scabs.

**Other typical symptoms** that may begin to appear one to two days before rash include: fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, and/or headache.

Children and students in school settings have a higher likelihood of spreading chickenpox because they are constantly in close contact with each other. Children usually miss 5 to 6 days of school or childcare due to chickenpox.

Chickenpox vaccine prevents the disease and outbreaks in childcare settings and schools. This leads to:

- Less illness and less school time missed by students.
- Less chance of exposing people who cannot get vaccinated.

Laboratory evidence of immunity or laboratory confirmation of disease may be necessary by your healthcare provider

Most people who get the vaccine will not get chickenpox. If a vaccinated person does get chickenpox, the symptoms are usually milder with fewer or no blisters (they may have just red spots) and low or no fever. The chickenpox vaccine prevents almost all cases of severe illness.

If diagnosed, there are several things that you can do at home to help relieve chickenpox symptoms and prevent skin infections.

- Calamine lotion and a cool bath with added baking soda, uncooked oatmeal, or colloidal oatmeal may help relieve some of the itching.
- Try to keep fingernails trimmed short and minimize scratching to prevent the virus from spreading to others and to help prevent skin infections.
  - If you do scratch a blister by accident, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **Do not use aspirin or aspirin-containing products to relieve fever from chickenpox.**
  - The use of aspirin in children with chickenpox has been associated with Reye's syndrome, a severe disease that affects the liver and brain and can cause death.
  - Instead, use non-aspirin medications, such as acetaminophen, to relieve fever from chickenpox. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends avoiding treatment with ibuprofen if possible because it has been associated with life-threatening bacterial skin infections.

For more information, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox> or contact Naugatuck Valley Health District's Public Health Nurse at (203) 881-3255 x107.

