

# Health Technology Assessment (HTA) of adding chickenpox vaccine to the childhood immunisation schedule

HIQA has published a HTA of adding the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine to the routine childhood immunisation schedule following a request from the Department of Health and the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC).



Chickenpox is a common highly contagious disease that mainly affects children.

In Ireland, about 58,000 people are affected every year. While usually a mild disease, it can cause serious complications requiring hospitalisation.

A vaccine for chickenpox has been available since the 1970s.

Several countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, and the USA, have implemented a chickenpox vaccination program for children.

In Ireland, the chickenpox vaccine is not part of the vaccination program for children provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

However, parents or guardians can buy the vaccine for their child if they wish to.



The HTA considered the clinical effectiveness and safety of the vaccine. It also assessed the value for money, cost, organisational, social, and ethical issues of providing a chickenpox vaccination programme.

It is estimated a chickenpox vaccine programme would cost between €13 million (for a one-dose programme) and €28 million (for a two-dose programme) over five years.



Chickenpox often leads to school and creche absences for children. Parents or guardians may also need to take time off work to care for their sick child.

Vaccination represents a good use of healthcare resources and when the broader cost to society of chickenpox is taken into account, vaccination is cost saving.