

As your healthcare provider, I recommend the Chickenpox vaccine... Please THINK TWICE and vaccinate!!

Chickenpox, also known as varicella, is a virus that causes a rash with severe itching, fever, headache, and tiredness. While many people think of chickenpox as a mild infection that is harmless and a nuisance, it can actually be very harmful, even deadly.



Photo courtesy of the CDC

Can't you catch chickenpox since it's a live vaccine?

The virus used in the vaccine has been weakened so that it cannot cause disease. Natural or "wild-type" varicella reproduces thousands of times, which causes disease.

The cells in the vaccine reproduce fewer times, which is why they don't make you sick, but **still protect you** if you come into contact with the wild-type virus. Some people get a little rash after getting the vaccine, but it's not contagious.

I prefer natural immunity.

Natural immunity to chickenpox means that your child could suffer from the itchy lesions, headaches, and fever associated with chickenpox disease. The vaccine provides protection from that disease and all the complications that can come with it. Vaccine immunity also provides:

- **Lasting immunity**, similar to infection
- **Very low risk of shingles** later in life
- Older teens and adults will avoid the **severe cases** of chickenpox that are common in this age group.
- Women of child-bearing age will **avoid congenital birth defects** passed to the fetus if infected while pregnant.

How is it spread?

Chickenpox is spread **through the air** and **in the fluid** that fills the blisters on someone's skin. It is very contagious and is easily spread to other people.

What's an outbreak?

A outbreak is when 5 or more people in the same area, like a school, get the chickenpox.

Un-immunized children can be excluded from (forced to leave) school if there is an outbreak, for **3 weeks or more**. Chickenpox is **contagious before the rash is seen** and for as long as the lesions are fluid filled. You won't always know if your child has been exposed.

"Jesse Lee was a happy boy with lots of friends, who liked making people laugh. He was a caring, loving kid who wouldn't hurt anyone or anything.

On a Monday in August, Jesse came home from school with a bad headache. It seemed like a migraine. He didn't have a fever, but felt horrible. He started throwing up that night and continued through the next day. Tuesday he rested as best he could and I watched his fluid intake, keeping him as comfortable as possible. I even slept in his room with him.

On Wednesday, he wasn't getting any better so we took him to the doctor, who prescribed antibiotics. Later that day, we saw that Jesse had spots on his chest and belly. It turned out to be chickenpox! At this point, he had managed to eat and drink a bit. But by Thursday, he was dry retching and in really bad shape.

We took him back to the doctor and they sent us immediately to the local hospital. We could see it was getting harder for Jesse to breathe and he was struggling for air. The hospital gave him oxygen, and x-rayed his chest. That's when they discovered he had a bad case of pneumonia.



The local hospital decided that he needed treatment beyond what they could give him. That same evening they sent him to a different hospital. They put him on 100% oxygen because his breathing was so labored. But the second hospital couldn't treat him either. Seeing him exhausted just from trying to breathe, the medical team decided it would be best to put Jesse into an induced coma so he could be transferred, along with the specialist respiratory team, to yet another hospital.

They gave us one last chance to talk to him while he was still conscious. We were afraid we were saying goodbye, not knowing whether or not he would ever wake up. Jesse asked my husband if he was going to die. Paul managed to say "no, mate, we'll see you when you wake up." ...

It's been 12 years since Jesse's death. People have no idea what we go through every day. We miss him so much. After all our heartache, we'd like to spare other families our pain. Jesse deserves to have his story told.

We want to warn other parents that while chickenpox is often a mild disease, you can't count on it. Complications can happen. Yes, it can even kill. Being healthy is no guarantee. There is no way to predict how it will affect your child. We have the opportunity to prevent this disease with a simple vaccination. We urge parents: **protect your children."**

Jesse Lee Newman
12.11.1991 – 9.1.2001
Rest In Peace

Jesse's story can be read in its entirety at: <http://bit.ly/ZSKJFp>

For additional information on this vaccine and all vaccines please see the following trustworthy resources:

www.vaccine.chop.edu

www.immunize.org

www.aimtoolkit.org

www.shotbyshot.org

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

www.michigan.gov/immunize

If, after reading this information, you still feel vaccination is not right for you or your child, please follow this advice:

Make sure all health care professionals, including ambulance drivers, emergency rooms and urgent care centers, know your child is not fully vaccinated. It could help them diagnose and treat a vaccine preventable disease.

Symptoms of varicella include: an itchy rash that covers the body, fever, achiness, or tiredness. The rash can be flat bumps or filled with fluid.

