

## **Package leaflet: Information for the user**

### **VARIVAX® powder and solvent for suspension for injection Varicella Vaccine (live)**

**Read all of this leaflet carefully before you or your child is vaccinated because it contains important information for you.**

- Keep this leaflet. You may need to read it again.
- If you have any further questions, ask your doctor or your pharmacist.
- This vaccine has been prescribed for you or your child. Do not pass it on to others. It may harm them, even if their signs of illness are the same as yours.
- If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. This includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet. See section 4.

#### **What is in this leaflet:**

1. What VARIVAX is and what it is used for
2. What you need to know before you or your child receives VARIVAX
3. How VARIVAX is given
4. Possible side effects
5. How to store VARIVAX
6. Contents of the pack and other information

#### **1. What VARIVAX is and what it is used for**

VARIVAX is a vaccine to help protect adults and children against varicella (chickenpox). Vaccines are used to protect you or your child against infectious diseases.

VARIVAX can be administered to persons 12 months of age or older.

VARIVAX may also be administered to infants from 9 months of age under special circumstances, such as to conform with national vaccination schedules or in outbreak situations.

It may also be given to persons who have no history of chickenpox, but who have been exposed to someone who has chickenpox.

Vaccination within 3 days of exposure may help prevent chickenpox or reduce the severity of disease, resulting in fewer skin lesions and shorter duration of illness. In addition, there is limited information that being vaccinated up to 5 days after exposure may reduce disease severity.

As with other vaccines, VARIVAX does not completely protect all individuals from naturally acquired varicella.

#### **2. What you need to know before you or your child receives VARIVAX**

##### **Do not use VARIVAX if:**

- you or your child are allergic to any varicella vaccine, to any of the components of this vaccine (including gelatin, neomycin or any of the other ingredients listed in section 6).
- you or your child have a blood disorder or any type of malignant cancers including leukaemia and lymphomas that affects the immune system.
- you or your child are receiving immunosuppressive therapy (including high doses of corticosteroids).

- you or your child have any illness (such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)) or take any medicine that weakens the immune system. Whether you or your child receives the vaccine will depend upon the level of your immune defences.
- you or your child have a family member born with immunodeficiency, or there is a family history of immunodeficiency.
- you or your child have active untreated tuberculosis.
- you or your child have a temperature higher than 38.5°C; however, low-grade fever itself is not a reason not to be vaccinated.
- you are pregnant. In addition, pregnancy should be avoided for 1 month after vaccination.

**Warnings and precautions:**

**The person who has received VARIVAX should attempt to avoid close contact with susceptible high risk individuals for up to 6 weeks following vaccination.**

In the following instances, special care should be taken:

- if after being vaccinated you come into contact with anyone who falls under one of the following categories:
  - individuals with a weakened immune system.
  - pregnant women who have never had varicella.
  - newborn babies whose mothers have never had varicella.
 These individuals may be at risk from catching chickenpox from the person who has been vaccinated.
- if you regularly come into close contact with individuals who might be at risk of severe varicella if they catch the vaccine strain from you.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before you or your child receive VARIVAX:

- if you or your child have a weakened immune system (such as HIV infection). You or your child should be closely monitored as the response to the vaccine may not be sufficient to ensure protection against the illness (see section 2 "Do not use VARIVAX if").

**Other medicines (or other vaccines) and VARIVAX:**

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you or your child are taking or have recently taken any other medicines (or other vaccines).

If any type of vaccine is due to be given at the same time as VARIVAX, your doctor or nurse will advise you whether this can be given or not. VARIVAX may be given at the same time as the following routine childhood vaccinations: measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR), vaccines against Haemophilus influenza type b, hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and polio vaccine that is given by mouth.

Vaccination should be deferred for at least 5 months after any blood or plasma transfusions, or administration of normal human immune globulin (a sterile solution of naturally produced antibodies taken from donated human blood) or varicella zoster immune globulin (VZIG) have been given.

Following vaccination with VARIVAX, you or your child should not receive any immune globulin, including VZIG, for 1 month thereafter unless your doctor decides it is necessary.

Vaccine recipients should avoid products that contain aspirin (salicylates) for 6 weeks after vaccination with VARIVAX as this may cause a serious condition called Reye syndrome which can affect all your body organs.

## **Pregnancy and breast-feeding**

VARIVAX should not be administered to pregnant women.

If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, think you may be pregnant or are planning to have a baby, ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice before the vaccination is given. Also, it is important that you do not become pregnant within one month after having the vaccine. During this time you should use an effective method of birth control to avoid pregnancy.

Inform your doctor if you are breast-feeding or if you intend to breast-feed. Your doctor will decide if you should receive VARIVAX.

## **Driving and using machines**

There is no information to suggest that VARIVAX will affect your ability to drive or use machines.

## **3. How to use VARIVAX**

VARIVAX will be administered by your doctor or health care professional.

VARIVAX is given by injection as follows:

- Infants from 9 months to 12 months of age:  
Under special circumstances (to conform with national vaccination schedules or in outbreaks of chickenpox), VARIVAX may be administered between 9 and 12 months of age. To ensure optimal protection against chickenpox, two doses of VARIVAX are needed and should be given at least three months apart.
- Children from 12 months to 12 years of age:  
To ensure optimal protection against chickenpox, two doses of VARIVAX should be given at least one month apart.
- Children from 12 months to 12 years of age with asymptomatic HIV:  
VARIVAX should be given as two doses by injection 12 weeks apart. Please ask your healthcare provider for more information.
- Teenagers 13 years of age and older and adults:  
VARIVAX is given as two doses by injection. The second dose should be given 4 to 8 weeks after the first dose.

The number and timing of doses should be determined by your doctor, using the official recommendations.

VARIVAX should not be given to children under 9 months of age.

VARIVAX should be injected into the muscle or under the skin either in the area of the outer thigh or of the upper arm. Usually for injections into the muscle, the thigh area is preferred in young children, whereas for older individuals, the upper arm area is the preferred injection site.

If you have a blood clotting disorder or low levels of platelets in your blood, the injection will be given under the skin.

Your doctor or health care professional will take care that VARIVAX is not injected into the bloodstream.

## **If you use more VARIVAX than you should**

Overdose is very unlikely because the vaccine is provided in single dose vials and is given by a doctor or health care professional.

## **If you think you have missed a dose of VARIVAX**

Contact your doctor who will decide if a dose is required and when to give it.

### **4. Possible side effects**

Like all vaccines and medicines, this vaccine can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them.

Very rarely (reported in less than 1 in 10,000 people), a severe allergic reaction may occur with symptoms that may include facial swelling, low blood pressure, and difficulty breathing, with or without rash. These reactions often occur very soon after the injection. If any of these symptoms or other serious symptoms are noticed after vaccination, you must seek immediate medical attention.

Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following rare or very rare side effects:

- bruising or bleeding more easily than normal; red or purple, flat, pinhead spots under the skin, severe paleness
- severe skin rash (ulcers and blistering that may involve the eyes, mouth, and/or genitals; red, often itchy spots which start on the limbs and sometimes on the face and the rest of the body ) (Stevens-Johnson syndrome; erythema multiforme)
- muscle weakness, abnormal sensations, tingling in the arms, legs, and upper body (Guillain-Barré syndrome)
- fever, feeling sick, vomiting, headache, stiff neck and sensitivity to light (meningitis)
- stroke
- seizures (fits) with or without a fever

The following side effects have been observed:

Very common reactions (*reported by more than 1 out of 10 people*) were:

- fever
- injection site redness of the skin, pain/sensitivity to touch/soreness, and swelling

Common reactions (*reported by less than 1 out of 10 but more than 1 out of 100 people*) were:

- upper respiratory tract infection (nose, throat, airway)
- irritability
- rash, measles-/rubella-/varicella-like rash
- injection site rash, itching at the injection site

Uncommon reactions (*reported by less than 1 out of 100 but more than 1 out of 1,000 people*) were:

- headache, drowsiness
- discharge and itching of the eyes with crusting of eyelids (conjunctivitis)
- cough, nasal congestion, chest congestion, runny nose, loss of appetite, flu
- upset stomach with vomiting, cramps, diarrhoea caused by a virus
- diarrhoea, vomiting (gastroenteritis)
- ear infection, sore throat
- crying, inability to sleep, sleep disorders
- varicella skin rash caused by virus (chicken pox), illness caused by a virus, inflammation of the skin, nappy rash, redness of the skin, sweat rash or prickly heat, hives
- weakness/fatigue, generally feeling unwell, injection site reactions including hive-like rash, numbness, bleeding, bruising, hardened raised area of the skin, warm feeling, warm to touch

Rare reactions (*reported by less than 1 out of 1,000 people but more than 1 out of 10,000 people*) were:

- swollen glands, bruising or bleeding more easily than normal

- lack of emotion, nervousness, agitation, sleeping too much, abnormal dreams, changes in emotions, difficulty walking, seizures with a fever, shaking
- swelling of eyelid, irritation of eye
- ear pain
- feeling of fullness in the nose sometimes with throbbing ache and facial pressure or pain (sinusitis), sneezing, runny nose (rhinitis), congestion in the lung, bloody nose, wheezing, swelling of the tubes relating to the lungs (bronchitis), lung infection, severe lung infection with fever, chills, cough, congestion and shortness of breath (pneumonia)
- sore white patches in the mouth (fungal infection), flu-like illness, non-poisonous bite/sting
- stomach pain, upset stomach and feeling sick, excessive gas in the stomach, blood in the stool, mouth ulcer
- flushing, blisters, skin disorders and infections (including acne, bruising, cold sores, eczema, hives, measles, and sunburn)
- muscle/bone pain, aching muscles, pain of the hip, leg or neck, stiffness
- blood or fluid leaking from blood vessel
- injection site reactions including changes in skin colour, trauma, roughness/dryness, swollen lips

Side effects that have been reported during marketed use of VARIVAX include:

- illnesses affecting the nervous system (brain and/or spinal cord), sagging facial muscles and drooping eyelid on one side of the face (Bell's palsy), walking unsteadily, dizziness, tingling or numbness of the hands and feet
- shingles, sore throat (pharyngitis), purple or red-brown spots visible through the skin (Henoch-Schönlein purpura), secondary bacterial infections of the skin and soft tissues including impetigo and cellulitis, varicella (chickenpox), aplastic anaemia, which may include bruising or bleeding more easily than normal; red or purple, flat, pinhead spots under the skin; severe paleness

### **Reporting of side effects**

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in this leaflet. You can also report side effects directly (see details below). By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.

**United Kingdom:** Yellow Card Scheme at: [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store.

**Ireland:** HPRA Pharmacovigilance, Earlsfort Terrace, IRL - Dublin 2; Tel: +353 1 6764971; Fax: +353 1 6762517. Website: [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie); e-mail: [medsafety@hpra.ie](mailto:medsafety@hpra.ie)

## **5. How to store VARIVAX**

Keep this vaccine out of sight and reach of children.

Do not use this vaccine after the expiry date which is stated on the box after EXP. The expiry date refers to the last day of that month.

Store in a refrigerator (2°C - 8°C). Do not freeze. Keep the vial in the outer carton in order to protect from light.

Do not throw away any vaccines via wastewater or household waste. Ask your pharmacist how to throw away vaccines you no longer use. These measures will help to protect the environment.

## **6. Contents of the pack and other information**

### **What VARIVAX contains**

**The active ingredient is:** live attenuated varicella virus (Oka/Merck strain) (produced in MRC-5 human diploid cells).  
Each 0.5 mL dose of reconstituted vaccine contains: a minimum of 1,350 PFU (plaque forming units) of varicella virus (Oka/Merck strain).

**The other ingredients are:**

**Powder:**

Sucrose, hydrolysed gelatin, urea, sodium chloride, monosodium L-glutamate, anhydrous disodium phosphate, potassium dihydrogen phosphate and potassium chloride.

Residual components in trace quantities: neomycin.

**Solvent:**

Water for injections

**What VARIVAX looks like and contents of pack**

The vaccine consists of a white to off-white powder in a vial and a clear colourless liquid solvent in a pre-filled syringe. The product is available in packs of one or 10 doses.

The solvent provided is a prefilled syringe of water for injections with a fixed needle or without a needle. The secondary packaging for the without needle presentation may also contain 2 separate needles.

Not all pack sizes may be marketed.

**Marketing Authorisation Holder and Manufacturer**

**Holder of the Marketing Authorization:**

The Marketing Authorisation Holder in the UK is:

Merck Sharp & Dohme Limited  
Hertford Road, Hoddesdon  
Hertfordshire EN11 9BU  
United Kingdom

The Marketing Authorisation Holder in Ireland is:

Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Limited  
Red Oak North, South County Business Park  
Leopardstown  
Dublin 18  
Ireland

**Manufacturer Responsible for Batch Release**

Merck Sharp & Dohme  
Waarderweg 39 PO Box 581  
2031 BN 2003 PC (The Netherlands)

**This medicinal product is authorised in the Member States of the EEA under the following names:**

VARIVAX

Deutschland; Eesti; Ελλάδα; España; France; Ireland; Italia; Κύπρος; Latvija; Lietuva; Magyarország; Malta; Norge; Österreich; Portugal; Slovenija; Slovenská republika; Suomi/Finland; Sverige; United Kingdom;

PROVARIVAX

België/Belgique/Belgien; Danmark; Luxembourg/Luxemburg; Nederland

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**The following information is intended for health care professionals only:**

**Instructions**

***Directions for vaccine preparation***

Parenteral drug products should be inspected visually for particulate matter and discoloration prior to administration.

The reconstituted vaccine should not be used if any particulate matter is noted or if the appearance is not a clear, colourless to pale yellow liquid.

The vaccine should not be mixed with other drugs.

The powder vaccine is to be reconstituted with the solvent provided.

If you are using presentations containing a prefilled syringe of solvent without needle packaged with 2 separate needles; one needle should be used for reconstitution and another for injection, the needle is attached by twisting in clockwise direction, until the needle fits securely on the syringe.

Inject the entire contents of the prefilled syringe of water for injections into the vial containing the powder vaccine and gently agitate to mix thoroughly.

Withdraw the entire contents in the same syringe provided and inject the vaccine by intramuscular or subcutaneous route.

Avoid contact with disinfectants when preparing the vaccine.

For the reconstitution of the vaccine it is recommended to use only the solvent provided in the prefilled syringe since it is free of preservatives or other antiviral substances that could inactivate the vaccine virus.

It is important to use a separate sterile syringe and needle for each patient to prevent transmission of infectious agents from one individual to another.

**The vaccine must be administered immediately after reconstitution in order to maintain potency.**

**Discard the vaccine if it is not used within 30 minutes after its preparation.  
Do not freeze the vaccine when reconstituted.**

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