



**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
DIVISION OF DISEASE CONTROL  
IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM**

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**The Newsletter of the West Philadelphia Varicella Active Surveillance Project (VASP)**

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Remember to report all cases of chickenpox and shingles to VASP. Cases can be

reported by:  
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**HEALTHCARE WORKERS NEEDED FOR STUDY...**

Have you been vaccinated against varicella? If so, you may be eligible to take part in a study examining varicella immunity in healthcare workers. This study is being conducted by VASP, CDC, and the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. The study involves a questionnaire and a blood test to check if you are fully protected against varicella. Free revaccination will be offered if needed.

Find out if you are fully protected against varicella. Call Dorothy Dragoni at (215) 614-0462.

Your support and participation in VASP activities are greatly appreciated!

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**New Guidelines for Varicella Zoster Virus (VZV) Vaccines: What You Need to Know**

**ACIP Recommends Universal Second Dose of Varicella Vaccine**

At their June 2006 meeting, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted unanimously to recommend a routine second dose of the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine for previously vaccinated 4 to 6 year olds. ACIP also recommended use of a second dose of varicella vaccine for catch up vaccination of children, adolescents, and adults who have previously received one dose of varicella vaccine. The new recommendation addresses concerns over percentage of single-dose vaccinees who will develop disease after exposure to varicella and the duration of immunity provided by a one-dose regimen. A second dose of varicella vaccine increases varicella zoster virus (VZV) antibody levels by 12-fold resulting in better protection against VZV as compared to a single dose. The recommendation for a universal second dose of varicella vaccine for those 4 years of age and older will become official when published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. The tentative publication date for the revised guidelines is January 2007.



varicella vaccine. In late fall, the PDPH Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program will begin to distribute the combination measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella vaccine (MMRV) instead of MMR and varicella vaccines separately, since the timing of both varicella vaccine doses mirrors the schedule for MMR vaccination (1<sup>st</sup> dose: 12 months, 2<sup>nd</sup> dose: 4 to 6 years). Providers will be able to order small quantities of MMR and varicella vaccines from VFC until the routine use of MMRV is in place. When placing VFC orders, providers should consider additional doses needed given the new recommendations for the two-dose varicella vaccine regimen. PDPH will send VFC providers further guidance in the near future.

**Implications for Schools and Daycares**

The universal second dose recommendation is expected to be incorporated into the City of Philadelphia school entry requirements for varicella immunity prior to the start of the 2007-2008 school year. Daycare entry requirements for varicella immunity will change when the American Academy of Pediatrics publishes its support of the second dose recommendation. VASP encourages school nurses and daycare staff to start documenting any second doses of varicella vaccine given to attendees this school year in preparation for the upcoming changes.

For more information, visit ACIP's Website at: [http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/varicella/varicella\\_acip\\_recs\\_prov\\_june\\_2006.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/varicella/varicella_acip_recs_prov_june_2006.pdf)

**Implications for Clinical Practice**

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) encourages healthcare providers to start administering the second varicella vaccine dose, when resources are available, to previously vaccinated 4 to 6 years olds and for catch-up vaccination among other older children who have received a single dose of

**Adults Need VZV Vaccine, Too...**

In October 2006, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to recommend adults 60 years of age and older receive the shingles (herpes zoster) vaccine, including those who have had a previous episode of the rash. The shingles vaccine acts to boost an individual's cell-mediated immunity to varicella zoster virus (VZV) in order to

prevent reactivation of latent VZV resulting in herpes zoster. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) licensed the shingles vaccine, ZostaVax® (Merck) in May 2006. ACIP's recommendations for use of shingles vaccine will become official when published in CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Some staffing changes have taken place within VASP recently. Mia Renwick, MPH is the new VASP Coordinator replacing Karl Heath, RN. We would also like to welcome Teenu Cherian, the new VASP Research Assistant. Please find updated contact information for VASP surveillance staff below:

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## Preventing Varicella Outbreaks in Schools and Daycares

For the 2006-2007 school year, entry requirements for varicella (chickenpox) immunity are in place for all daycares and school grades K-11 in the city of Philadelphia. Attendees who have a reliable history of varicella or received the age-appropriate dosage of varicella vaccine according to the initial ACIP recommendations published in 1996 (Ages 1-12 years: 1 dose, Ages 13+ years: 2 doses) are considered immune. Please keep in mind that the criteria for varicella immunity is expected to change next school year to reflect the new second dose recommendation for children 4 years of age and older previously vaccinated against varicella.



To prevent further spread of disease when a suspected varicella or herpes zoster (shingles) case occurs at a school or childcare facility, VASP recommends school/childcare staff:

- Exclude persons with varicella or herpes zoster (shingles) rashes regardless of their vaccination status.
- Send a letter to parents informing them about the case and post-exposure vaccination for susceptible persons (those who never have had varicella disease or vaccine).
- Enforce current childcare/school entry requirements for varicella immunity if not already doing so.
- Exclude immunocompromised persons until their physician provides written guidance.
- Exclude exposed susceptible persons from day 8 after the first case's rash onset to 21 days after the last case's onset or until vaccinated.

If a varicella outbreak (5+ cases within a 3-week period) should occur at a school or childcare facility, VASP recommends school/childcare staff:

- Send a letter to parents encouraging use of a second dose of varicella vaccine among previously vaccinated attendees.
- Exclude other susceptible persons as directed by VASP.

With similar guidelines in place during the 2005-2006 school year, 13 Philadelphia schools experienced varicella outbreaks involving 120 varicella cases and 5 herpes zoster cases among students and staff. Only 198 previously vaccinated students received second doses of varicella vaccine as part of outbreak control efforts according to school nurse reports.

VASP requests your assistance in promoting the use of a second dose of varicella vaccine among attendees who have previously received one dose if a varicella outbreak should occur at your facility this year. Those children who receive a second dose of varicella vaccine as part of outbreak control will not need another next year when the universal two-dose regimen is expected to be incorporated into the childcare/school entry requirements for varicella immunity.

Copies of the **2006-2007 Guidelines for Varicella Outbreak Prevention and Control in School or Childcare Settings** including template letters for parents are available through VASP. Contact Mia Renwick, MPH at (215) 685-6833.

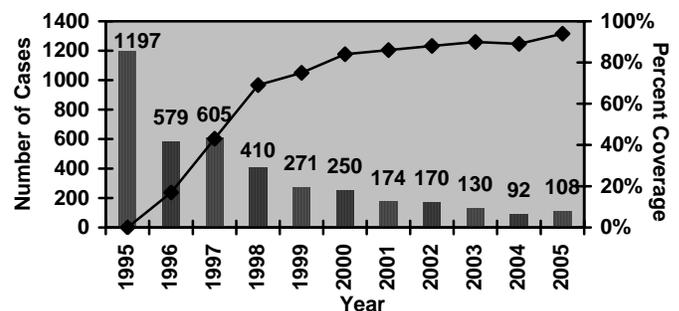
## Active Surveillance of Varicella in West Philadelphia, 1995-2005

In 2005, VASP completed its 11th year monitoring the impact of the varicella (chickenpox) vaccination program on the incidence of varicella in West Philadelphia using a population-based active surveillance system. VASP has documented a 91% decrease in the annual number of varicella cases occurring in West Philadelphia from 1995 (when varicella vaccine was licensed for use in the United States) through 2005 (Figure 1). During this same time period, varicella vaccine coverage among children 19 to 35 months in Philadelphia has climbed to 94% (Figure 1) according to the National Immunization Survey.

West Philadelphia VASP is one of two sites in the nation currently collaborating with CDC to conduct active varicella surveillance. The information collected by VASP with the assistance of its participating reporting sites and other community partners continues to provide information central to the evaluation of the varicella vaccination program, especially as

new varicella vaccine policies such as the universal second dose are implemented.

**Figure 1. West Philadelphia Varicella Cases and Varicella Vaccine Coverage Rates Among Children 19-35 months in Philadelphia, 1995-2005**



### ATTENTION ADULT HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

*Do you have patient's suffering from the debilitating pain associated with post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN)?*

The University of Pennsylvania's Pain Medicine Center (PMC) is accepting referrals for patients needing treatment of pain associated with PHN. PMC is a current active surveillance site located in West Philadelphia and services residents of Philadelphia and the tri-state area (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware). In addition to providing therapy to alleviate PHN pain, PMC also conducts PHN-related studies. Patients seeking treatment at PMC may be eligible to take part in these studies.

For more information, call (215) 662-8640.

### HERPES ZOSTER (SHINGLES) RESOURCES ONLINE

CDC's Shingles Vaccine Information Web Page:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vaccine/zoster/default.htm>

Immunization Action Coalition's Herpes Zoster (Shingles) Web Page: <http://www.immunize.org/zoster/>

The Shingles Vaccine Information Statement:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-shingles.pdf>

VZV Research Foundation's Website:  
<http://www.vzvfoundation.org/index.cfm>

ZostaVax Product Information:  
[http://www.merck.com/product/usa/pi\\_circulars/z/zostavax/zostavax\\_pi.pdf](http://www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/z/zostavax/zostavax_pi.pdf)

