Who should not get smallpox vaccine?

Smallpox vaccine contains a weakened live virus called “vaccinia.” Vaccinia is a virus related to smallpox but does NOT cause the disease. The vaccine is delivered in the upper arm by pricking the top layer of skin 15 times. The pricking is not deep and should not cause any active bleeding at the site.

What is the smallpox vaccine?

The vaccine is licensed in the U.S. is called ACAM2000. It is a vaccine that has been modified to prevent the virus from reproducing in the body. ACAM2000 is a vaccine that has been modified to prevent the virus from reproducing in the body. It is delivered in the upper arm by pricking the top layer of skin 15 times. The pricking is not deep and should not cause any active bleeding at the site.

Who should not get the smallpox vaccine?

Prior to receiving the smallpox vaccine, individuals are required to complete the Smallpox Vaccination Screening Form. Individuals who should not receive the smallpox vaccine include those:

» With a current active case of the following skin conditions: (Once the skin condition is healed you may be vaccinated)
  • shingles
  • chickenpox
  • impetigo
  • burns
  • persistent skin rashes
  • psoriasis
  • an active case of herpes
  • uncontrolled acne
  • psoriasis
  • uncontrolled acne

» With any previous history of eczema, atopic dermatitis or persistent skin rashes

» With a current active case of the following skin conditions: (Once the condition is healed you may be vaccinated)
  • burns
  • impetigo
  • contact dermatitis
  • chickenpox
  • contact dermatitis
  • chickenpox
  • any other open skin lesions
  • any other open skin lesions

» Who are pregnant or could be pregnant

» Who live with or have intimate contact with a person who has any of the above conditions

» With serious heart or blood vessel conditions (such as angina, heart attack, coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, stroke, other cardiac problems)

» With at least 3 cardiac risk factors to include:
  • high cholesterol
  • high blood pressure
  • smoking

» Who have diabetes or uncontrolled diabetes

» Who have uncontrolled diabetes

» Who have or have intimate contact with a person who has any of the above conditions

» Who are pregnant or could be pregnant

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Why is the Department of Defense vaccinating personnel?

The DoD began the current smallpox vaccination program in 2002 to protect personnel traveling to high threat areas. The DoD began the current smallpox vaccination program in 2002 to protect personnel traveling to high threat areas.

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Who is required to receive the vaccine?

Vaccinations are also mandatory for some emergency-essential personnel and contractors, certain uniformed personnel assigned to special units, and comparable U.S. government civilian employees.

What is smallpox?

Smallpox is contagious and infectious disease caused by the variola virus. Smallpox can be deadly, resulting in death for about 3 out of 10 unvaccinated individuals. Survivors are often left with scars on their bodies and their eyes, resulting in blindness.

How does the smallpox virus spread and what are the symptoms?

The virus is usually spread by prolonged face-to-face contact with an infected person, by direct contact with infected body fluids or contaminated objects like clothing, towels, or bedding. Symptoms of smallpox begin with a high fever, headache, body aches, and fatigue. A pustular rash typically develops 12 to 14 days after exposure lasting for about 2 weeks. Infected with the smallpox virus is contagious from the time fever starts, but is most highly contagious when a rash begins. The infected person can spread the disease until the last scab falls off. There is no specific treatment to cure a smallpox infection, and the only way to prevent the disease is through vaccination.

Why is the Department of Defense vaccinating personnel?

Due to vaccination of the masses, smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980, and routine smallpox vaccination stopped. Although no cases of smallpox have been reported since the eradication, the potential exists for the virus to be used as a biological weapon by enemies of the U.S. The DoD began the current smallpox vaccination program in 2002 to protect personnel traveling to high threat areas.

Who is required to receive the vaccine?

Smallpox vaccination is mandatory for uniformed personnel deploying or assigned to the Korean Peninsula for 15 or more consecutive days. Vaccinations are also mandatory for some emergency-essential personnel and contractors, certain uniformed personnel assigned to special units, and comparable U.S. government civilian employees. For more details on the specific criteria for each of these groups, please see applicable DoD and Service policies.
Who should not get smallpox vaccine? (continued from previous page)

- Using eye drops or ointment
- With recent tattoos (30 days or less), tattoos must be healed before receiving the vaccine and until the site is healed.

What will I feel after vaccination?

Most individuals experience mild reactions that usually peak 3 to 12 days after vaccinations and rarely last more than 30 days. The most common reactions include:

- Itching at and around the vaccination site
- Swollen and/or sore lymph nodes in the armpit and neck
- Arm may become sore and red around vaccination site
- Fatigue

On rare occasions individuals may experience more serious side effects that require medical attention. For example, the experience of a few of the following symptoms it is important that you seek immediate medical care at the nearest medical facility:

- Rash or sores elsewhere on the body days to several weeks after vaccination
- A serious skin rash in people with eczema or atopic dermatitis
- Rash or sores elsewhere on the body
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat, exercise intolerance, shortness of breath or other heart symptoms within 30 days of vaccination. These symptoms may indicate an inflammation in and around the heart. Seek immediate medical care if you experience any of these symptoms.

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Remember to inform your doctor that you recently received a smallpox vaccine.

Smallpox Vaccination Site

To verify proper vaccination, it is important for a healthcare provider to evaluate your vaccination site 6 to 8 days after receiving the vaccine. People vaccinated for the first time may have a larger reaction than those being revaccinated. Your site may not look exactly like the picture, because everyone responds differently to the vaccine. However, if your vaccination site does NOT look similar to one of the pictures above, or if you have any questions or concerns about the smallpox vaccination site, contact your healthcare provider.

How should I care for the vaccination site?

Refer to the "W's":

1. Wear a non-stick bandage that covers the vaccination site
2. Wear long sleeves to cover the bandage
3. Wash your hands!

To reduce complications and spreading of the disease elsewhere on your body or to someone else:

- Keep site completely covered with a dry non-stick bandage (i.e., Band-Aid®, Telfa™ pad); DO NOT use gauze
- Avoid directly touching the vaccination site
- Disposable gloves do not take the place of rigorous handwashing. However, gloves can be used during dressing changes for added protection
- Do NOT let others touch your vaccination site or materials that may have touched your blister, like clothing and bandages
- Keep site dry as possible and when showering keep site covered
- Avoid swimming, wrestling, or other contact sports until site is healed
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or a alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Make sure you cover the site with a bandage and wear long sleeves to prevent scratching, especially in bed. Change your bandages frequently so surface remains dry. If you exercise enough to cause sweat to drip, use a waterproof or reinforced bandage. When not around others, you can leave the site uncovered; air drying will speed healing. Minimize close contact with infants until the site is healed, at least 30 days after vaccination.

Normal bathing can continue, but don’t touch or scrub the vaccination site. Be careful when toweling off as not to spread the virus to other parts of your body. Dry the site last by blotting with tissues, toilet paper, or paper towel. Do not use lotions or bandages and tissue paper in sealed or double plastic bags. You may add bleach, alcohol, or soap to the bag to kill the virus. Roughly a clean, dry bandage will keep the site covered. Do not use creams or ointments; they will delay healing and can spread the virus. Do not share clothes, towels, linen, or toiletries with others. To avoid the spreading of items by others, vaccine recipients should wash their own laundry in hot water with detergent.

Can the vaccine virus be sexually transmitted?

No, the virus is not passed through kissing or sex, and is not airborne. Although rare, transfer of the vaccine virus to a spouse and intimate partner has occurred. You can be intimate with your partner; however, be sure to follow all precautions as stated above, such as wearing a bandage and long sleeves, if the vaccination site is not properly covered. Be sure to thoroughly wash your hands before and after intimate contact.

What if I become pregnant within 4 weeks of my vaccination?

Women should avoid getting pregnant for 4 weeks after receiving the smallpox vaccination.

A very rare complication of women vaccinated during pregnancy is called fetal vaccinia. There have been only three cases in the 20th century and no reported cases since the U.S. started the smallpox program in 2002. If you received the smallpox vaccine within 42 days from conception it is recommended you enroll in the National Smallpox Vaccine Pregnancy Registry by calling 619.553.9255 (DSN 553.9255) or email to NHRC-VaccineRegistry@med.navy.mil. The registry will collect important health information and can answer the many questions from participants and their healthcare providers.

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