



**Oifig Náisiúnta Imdhíonta**  
Aonaid 8/9 Páirc Gnó Shráid an  
Mhainéir  
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7<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Deputy Smith  
Dáil Éireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

**Re: 32880/24 - To ask the Minister for Health the projected cost of providing two doses of the chicken pox varicella vaccine free to all children through the primary or school child immunisation programme; the estimated annual cost of providing this in 2025; the estimated five year cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. - Duncan Smith**

Dear Deputy Smith,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question, which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The HSE implements programmes on behalf of the Department of Health, in line with immunisation policy.

The Department of Health has approved that the Primary Childhood Immunisation Programme be expanded to include varicella immunisation for all children born on or after October 1<sup>st</sup> 2024. This is in line with a recommendation made by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) in February 2023, based on evidence for the effectiveness of varicella immunisation in preventing varicella illness, complications and hospitalisations.

Recommendations for varicella immunisation are that children born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 receive 1 dose of vaccine at the age of 12 months, and a second dose of varicella vaccine in junior infants in school, as the combined MMR and varicella vaccine, MMRV.

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) conducted a Health Technology Assessment (HTA) of adding chickenpox vaccine to the childhood immunisation schedule, and estimated a two dose varicella vaccination programme would cost €28million over five years.

There is no recommendation from NIAC, nor policy decision from the Department of Health, to provide varicella vaccine to all children in primary school.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lucy Jessop  
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