

Vaccinia, Disease or Adverse Event

Agent: Vaccinia virus, which is used in the smallpox vaccine

Mode of Transmission: Through injection with the smallpox vaccine or through direct contact with contaminated materials or the vaccination site before it has healed.

Signs/Symptoms: Include rash, fever and head and body aches. Some individuals, especially those with certain skin conditions or weakened immune systems, may experience more serious effects, such as a toxic or allergic reaction at the vaccination site or spread of the virus to other parts of the body.

Prevention: When smallpox is not circulating, and to prevent serious reaction to the vaccine, administration of the smallpox vaccine should be generally limited to laboratory workers who handle smallpox and similar viruses and certain healthcare workers. The vaccine is currently available only to members of emergency response teams and some military personnel.

Other Important Information: The U.S. government has enough smallpox vaccine to vaccinate every person in the country in the event of a smallpox emergency. Vaccinia became a reportable condition in Virginia in 2003.

The first report of vaccinia infection in Virginia was received in 2008. The infection occurred in a laboratory worker who handled vaccinia-infected mice. No cases of vaccinia have been reported in Virginia since 2008, yielding a five-year average of 0.2 cases per year.