Smallpox vaccine contains a weakened live virus called “vaccinia.” Vaccinia is a virus related to smallpox but does not cause the disease. After one dose of vaccine, about 95% of people develop protection within 5 to 10 days. Currently, in a pre-event setting a booster dose is recommended every 10 years to maintain immunity.

The smallpox vaccine that is licensed in the U.S. is called ACAM2000. 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.

Who should not get smallpox vaccine?

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

- With a weak immune system due to disease, medication, or radiation therapy
- With any previous history of eczema, atopic dermatitis or persistent skin rashes
- With a current active case of the following skin conditions:
  - shingles
  - chickenpox
  - contact dermatitis
  - impetigo
  - burns
  - psoriasis
  - an active case of herpes
  - uncontrolled acne
  - any other open skin condition
- 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, or any other of the above conditions)
- With at least 3 cardiac risk factors to include:
  - diabetes
  - high blood pressure
  - high cholesterol
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The smallpox vaccine is called “ACAM2000.” 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.

Who is required to receive the vaccine?

Smallpox vaccination is mandatory for uniformed personnel deploying or assigned to the Korean Peninsula for 35 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 details on the specific criteria for each of these groups, please see applicable DoD and Service policies.
How 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
- Fever, headache, and body ache
- Fatigue
- Arm may become sore and red around vaccination site
- Swollen and/or sore lymph nodes in the armpit and neck
- Itching at and around the vaccination site

On rare occasions individuals may experience more serious side effects that require immediate medical attention. If you experience any of the below symptoms it is important that you seek immediate medical care at the nearest medical facility.

- Rash or sores elsewhere on the body days after vaccination
- Allergic reaction (hives, wheezing, or light headedness) after vaccination
- A serious skin rash in people with eczema or atopic dermatitis
- Ongoing infection of skin with tissue destruction or site is unable to heal
- Confusion, paralysis, numbness, change in vision, or weakness of arm, leg, or face
- Chest pain, rapid heartbeat, excessive tiredness, shortness of breath or any other heart symptoms within 30 days of vaccination. These symptoms may indicate an allergic reaction in and around the heart. Seek immediate medical care if you experience any of these symptoms.

Remember to inform your doctor that you recently received a smallpox vaccination. Contact the 24-hour DHA Immunization Healthcare Support Center at 877.GETVACC (436-8222) and press Option 1 for immediate medical care if you experience any of these symptoms.

Who should get smallpox vaccine? (continued from previous page)

- Who have had problems after previous doses or are allergic to the vaccine or any of its component
- Who are breastfeeding
- Women should avoid getting pregnant for 4 weeks after receiving the vaccine
- 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, you may spread the virus to your partner. Be sure to thoroughly wash your hands before and after sexual contact.

How should I care for the vaccination site?

- Remember the three “W’s”:
  - Wear a non-stick bandage that covers the vaccination site
  - Use a large bandage to cover the bandage
  - 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 touching the vaccination site
- Do NOT let others touch your vaccination site or materials that may have touched your blister; like clothing and bandages
- Keep site as 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 sores do not remain wet. If you are unable to cover your site with long sleeves, you may clean your site daily with soap and water.

Can the vaccine virus be sexually transmitted?

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

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

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 2003. 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 at DMS001333-BirthRegistry@mail.mil. The registry will collect important health information and can answer the many questions from participants and their healthcare providers.

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 harder reaction than those being revaccinated. Your site may not look like any of the pictures above, on or between days 6 to 8 after vaccination.

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