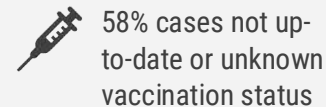
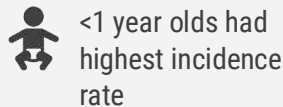
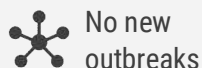
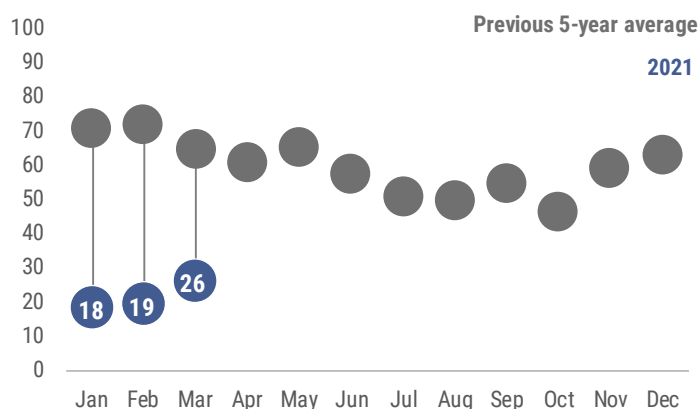


Varicella Surveillance

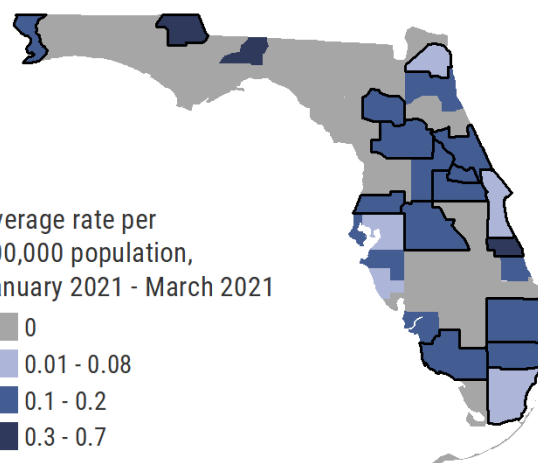
March Key Points



The number of varicella cases reported in March 2021 increased from the previous month and remained below the previous 5-year average. Due to robust vaccination programs, there is no longer discernable seasonality for varicella cases in the United States.

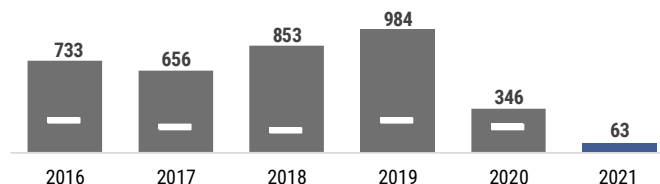


In March 2021, 26 varicella cases were reported in 16 counties, outlined in black in the map below. From January 2020 through March 2021 the average county rate was highest in Northwest Florida.



In 2021, 63 varicella cases were reported in 26 counties.

The annual number of reported varicella cases decreased from 2016 to 2017. In 2020 and 2021, case counts are lower than those seen in previous years at this time.



*The white bars indicate the total number of cases as of March for each year



In March, the varicella rate was highest among infants <1 year old at 1.3 cases per 100,000 population, which is consistent with previous months. Infants <1 year old are too young to receive varicella vaccination, which is why vaccination of siblings, parents, grandparents, and other age groups is important in infection prevention among infants.



The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting health care seeking behavior, which may be impacting the diagnosis and reporting of varicella cases that are shown in this report. For more information on the COVID-19 pandemic in Florida, please visit [FloridaHealthCOVID-19.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov/covid-19).

Varicella Surveillance



In March, **3 cases were transmitted within households** and **no cases were associated with an outbreak**. For most varicella cases, exposure to other known cases is not identified. In Florida, transmission setting is not routinely identified for non-outbreak cases, resulting in 58% of cases reporting unknown setting in March.

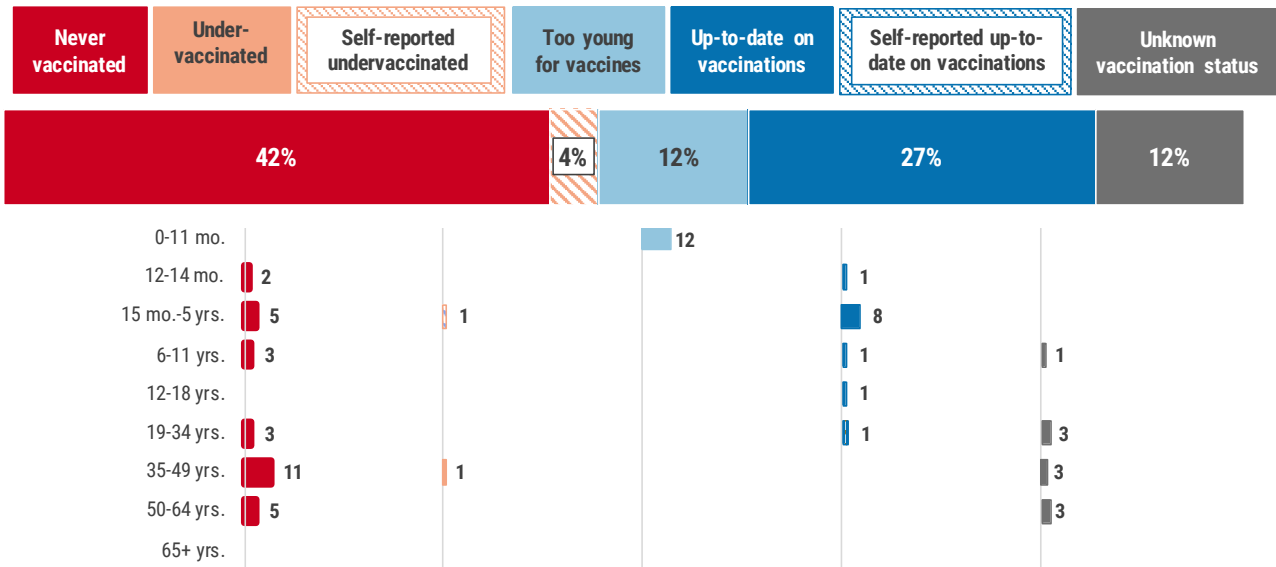
People with shingles infection can transmit the virus that causes varicella to people without immunity. In March, **7 cases** reported having contact with someone diagnosed with shingles during their exposure period.

Household-associated Outbreak-associated Total cases



In March 2021, **58% of individuals** reported with varicella had not received the recommended number of varicella vaccinations for their age or had unknown vaccination status. Vaccination against varicella is important for infants, children, teenagers, and adults. If a person was born before July 1, 1994, the current varicella immunization recommendation would not have been implemented when they were receiving their childhood immunizations. Based on the case's age, **25 cases** in 2021 would not have been vaccinated under the current childhood immunization recommendations.

In 2021, the majority of adults aged 19 years and older with varicella were not up-to-date on their varicella vaccinations or had unknown vaccination status. Although individuals who have been vaccinated can still develop varicella, **complete and timely vaccination remains the best way to prevent varicella and severe complications**.



National activity

Varicella incidence decreased significantly following the vaccine becoming available in 1995 and has continued to decrease since 2006 when recommendations changed from 1 to 2 doses of varicella vaccine. From 2006 to 2015, all age groups had a substantial decrease in incidence with the largest decline in children aged 5 to 14 years. Although varicella is not reported to the CDC by all states, based on available data, the number of varicella cases nationally has steadily decreased each year from 2012 to 2015.

Varicella surveillance goals

- Identify and control outbreaks, monitor trends, and identify severe outcomes
- Identify transmission settings in non-outbreak cases to prevent the spread of sporadic cases
- Monitor effectiveness of immunization programs and vaccines

To learn more about varicella, please visit [FloridaHealth.gov/Varicella](https://www.floridahealth.gov/Varicella). For more information on the data sources used in Florida for varicella surveillance, see the last page of this report.