



## What You Need to Know: Shingles Vaccine

**You can protect yourself against shingles and its health dangers. Adults aged 50 and older should get the shingles vaccine.**

### About the shingles vaccine:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people **aged 50 and older get two doses of the recombinant zoster vaccine (RSV) (Shingrix)** to prevent shingles and its complications.

The shingles vaccine is the only way to protect against shingles and postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), the most common complication of shingles. (PHN can cause long-term nerve pain, even after you no longer have shingles.) In fact, Shingrix is more than 90% effective at preventing shingles and PHN for people aged 50 and older who have healthy immune systems.

You should get two doses of Shingrix, given 2 to 6 months apart. If it has been more than 6 months since your first shot, and you still haven't received the second shot, you should still get the second shot even after the 6 months. People with weakened immune systems can get the second dose 1 to 2 months after the first dose.

### You should get Shingrix even if in the past you:

- Have already had shingles
- Received a previous shingles vaccine called Zostavax\*
- Received varicella (chickenpox) vaccine

If you have had shingles in the past, Shingrix can help prevent you from getting it again. There is no specific length of time that you need to wait after the acute stage of shingles is over before you can get Shingrix. However, you should make sure the shingles rash has gone away before you get vaccinated.

### Do not get Shingrix if you:

- Have ever had a severe allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or after a dose of Shingrix
- Currently have shingles
- Currently are pregnant
- Currently have a moderate or severe illness. You should usually wait to recover before you get the vaccine.

\* A shingles vaccine called zoster vaccine live (Zostavax) is no longer available for use in the United States. If you had Zostavax in the past, you should still get Shingrix. Talk to your healthcare professional to determine the best time to get Shingrix

## Side Effects

The Shingrix vaccine can have side effects such as pain, redness, and swelling where the shot is given, fatigue, fever, headache, nausea, diarrhea, and muscle or joint pain. These side effects are usually mild, but about 1 in 6 people has a reaction to the Shingrix vaccine that prevents them from doing normal activities. However, most symptoms resolve in 1 to 3 days. You should avoid strenuous activities for a few days after vaccination.

## More About Shingles

Shingles is a viral disease of nerves and skin that causes a blistering rash and pain in the area of the rash. Shingles comes from the same virus that causes chickenpox (varicella zoster virus). There is no cure for shingles, but it can be prevented and treated. Anyone who has had chickenpox in the past can get shingles, because the virus stays in your nerves even after you recover. The shingles vaccine can help you avoid getting shingles.

Shingles can be very painful, but for healthy people, the discomfort and rash usually disappear within two to four weeks. However, adults over the age of 60 and people who have other health problems may have symptoms that last longer. Shingles may also cause complications. The most common

of these is long-term nerve pain called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN). This painful condition can stay for years.

## Symptoms of shingles include:

- The first sign of shingles may be tender, numb, painful, burning, or itchy skin. These symptoms can happen before any rash appears.
- Rashes or blisters that appear on one side of your body, often on your face or around your waist
- Burning or shooting pain, tingling, or itching
- Fever, chills
- Headache, upset stomach

## How Common is Shingles?

Scientists do not yet know why some people who have had chickenpox never get shingles and why some do. But about 30% of people in the U.S. will get shingles at some time in their lives. Your risk of shingles also increases as you get older. The chance for complications, including nerve pain, also increases with age. About half of Americans aged 85 years and older have had at least one case of shingles. Having it once doesn't protect you from getting it again.

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*DISCLAIMER:* This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other healthcare provider. Always consult your healthcare provider about your medications, symptoms, and health problems. November 2024

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