

Shingles Vaccine

What You Need to Know

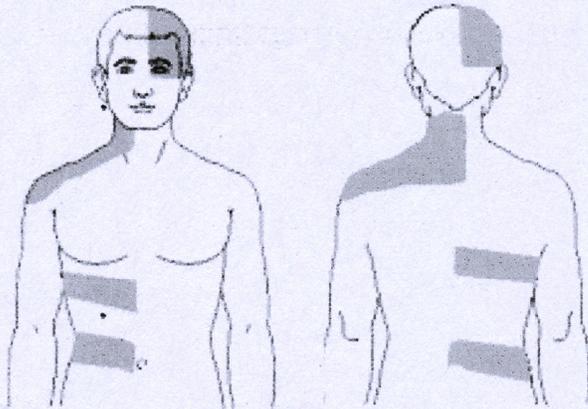
Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite www.immunize.org/vis

1 What is shingles?

Shingles is a painful skin rash, often with blisters. It is also called Herpes Zoster, or just Zoster.

A shingles rash usually appears on one side of the face or body and lasts from 2 to 4 weeks. Its main symptom is pain, which can be quite severe. Other symptoms of shingles can include fever, headache, chills and upset stomach. Very rarely, a shingles infection can lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, brain inflammation (encephalitis) or death.



For about 1 person in 5, severe pain can continue even long after the rash clears up. This is called **post-herpetic neuralgia**.

Shingles is caused by the Varicella Zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox.

Only someone who has had chickenpox—or, rarely, has gotten chickenpox vaccine—can get shingles. The virus stays in your body, and can cause shingles many years later.

You can't catch shingles from another person with shingles. However, a person who has never had chickenpox (or chicken pox vaccine) could get **chickenpox** from someone with shingles. This is not very common.

Shingles is far more common in people 50 years of age and older than in younger people. It is also more common in people whose immune systems are weakened because of a disease such as cancer, or drugs such as steroids* or chemotherapy.

At least 1 million people a year in the United States get shingles.

2 Shingles vaccine

A vaccine for shingles was licensed in 2006. In clinical trials, the vaccine reduced the risk of shingles by 50%. It can also reduce pain in people who still get shingles after being vaccinated.

A single dose of shingles vaccine is recommended for adults 60 years of age and older.

3 Some people should not get shingles vaccine or should wait.

A person should not get shingles vaccine who:

- has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of shingles vaccine. Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies.
- has a weakened immune system because of current:
 - AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system,
 - treatment with drugs that affect the immune system, such as prolonged use of high-dose steroids,
 - cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy,
 - cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma.
- is pregnant, or might be pregnant. Women should not become pregnant until at least 4 weeks after getting shingles vaccine.

Someone with a minor acute illness, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. But anyone with a moderate or severe acute illness should usually wait until they recover before getting the vaccine. This includes anyone with a temperature of 101.3° F or higher.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

4**What are the risks from shingles vaccine?**

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. However, the risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

No serious problems have been identified with shingles vaccine.

Mild problems

- Redness, soreness, swelling, or itching at the site of the injection (about 1 person in 3).
- Headache (about 1 person in 70).

Like all vaccines, shingles vaccine is being closely monitored for unusual or severe problems.

5**What if there is a serious reaction?****What should I look for?**

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or behavior changes.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

What should I do?

- If you think it is a severe allergic reaction or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 or get the person to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your doctor.
- Afterward, the reaction should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your doctor might file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

VAERS is only for reporting reactions. They do not give medical advice.

6**How can I learn more?**

- Ask your doctor.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Vaccine Information Statement
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