

From the CDC (Centre for Disease Control & Prevention)

Shingles Vaccination: What Everyone Should Know

Your risk of shingles and post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) increases as you get older. CDC recommends that people 60 years old and older get shingles vaccine to prevent shingles and PHN.

This vaccine reduces the risk of developing shingles by 51% and PHN by 67%. It is given in one dose as a shot, and can be given in a doctor's office or pharmacy.

Who Should Get Shingles Vaccine?

People 60 years of age or older should get shingles vaccine. They should get the vaccine whether or not they recall having had chickenpox, which is caused by the same virus as shingles. Studies show that more than 99% of Americans aged 40 and older have had chickenpox, even if they don't remember getting the disease. There is no maximum age for getting shingles vaccine.

Even if you have had shingles, you can still receive shingles vaccine to help prevent future occurrences of the disease. There is no specific length of time you must wait after having shingles before receiving shingles vaccine, but generally you should make sure the shingles rash has disappeared before getting vaccinated. The decision on when to get vaccinated should be made with your healthcare provider. Shingles vaccine is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for people aged 50 years and older. However, CDC does not have a recommendation for routine use of shingles vaccine in people 50 through 59 years old. Protection from shingles vaccine lasts about 5 years, so adults vaccinated before they are 60 years old might not be protected later in life when the risk for shingles and its complications are greatest. Adults 50 through 59 years who have questions about shingles vaccine should discuss the risks and benefits with a healthcare provider.

Talk with your healthcare provider if you have questions about shingles vaccine. Shingles vaccine is available at Anderson Medical Centre.

Who Should Not Get Shingles Vaccine?

- A person who has ever had a life-threatening or severe allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of shingles vaccine. *Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies.*
- A person who has a weakened immune system because of:
 - HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system,
 - treatment with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids,
 - cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy, or
 - cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma.
- Women who are 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.

This information was taken directly from the [Shingles Vaccine Information Statement \(VIS\)](#) dated 10/06/2009.

How Well Does Shingles Vaccine Work?

Zostavax[®], the shingles vaccine, reduced the risk of shingles by 51% and the risk of post-herpetic neuralgia by 67% based on a large study of more than 38,000 adults aged 60 years or older. Protection from shingles vaccine lasts about 5 years.

While the vaccine was most effective in people 60 through 69 years old, it also provides some protection for people 70 years old and older.

Adults vaccinated before age 60 years might not be protected later in life when the risk for shingles and its complications are greatest.

What Are the Possible Side Effects of 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 side effects of shingles vaccine:

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

It is safe to be around infants and young children, pregnant women, or people with weakened immune systems after you get the shingles vaccine. There is no documentation of a person getting chickenpox from someone who has received the shingles vaccine (which contains varicella zoster virus).

Some people who get the shingles vaccine will develop a chickenpox-like rash near the place where they were vaccinated. As a precaution, this rash should be covered until it disappears.

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. If you have 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.

For more information on possible side effects from vaccination, visit CDC's [Possible Side Effects from Vaccines](#) page.

How Can I Pay For Shingles Vaccine?

Most private health insurance plans cover the vaccine for people 60 years of age or older. Some plans cover the vaccine for people 50 through 59 years of age. Please check with them to verify. The cost of the vaccine is \$210 and is dispensed at the Anderson Medical Centre.