

What You Need to Know About Shingles and the Shingles Vaccine

In the US, currently 1 million people get shingles every year, and about one out of every three people will get shingles in their lifetime.

What Is Shingles?

Shingles, also known as zoster or herpes zoster, is a painful skin rash caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. If you've had chickenpox, you are at risk of getting shingles.

- **One out of every three people 60 years old or older will get shingles.**
- **One out of six people older than 60 years who get shingles will have severe pain. The pain can last for months or even years.**
- **The most common complication of shingles is severe pain where the shingles rash was. This pain can be debilitating. There is no treatment or cure from this pain. As people get older, they are more likely to develop long-term pain as a complication of shingles and the pain is likely to be more severe.**
- **Shingles may also lead to serious complications involving the eye. Very rarely, shingles can also lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, brain inflammation (encephalitis), or death.**

Protect Yourself Against Shingles

Adults 60 years old or older should talk to their healthcare professional about getting a one-time dose of the shingles vaccine.

- **The shingles vaccine can reduce your risk of shingles and the long-term pain it can cause.**
- **Persons who have already had shingles or who have a chronic medical condition can receive the shingles vaccine.**
- **In a clinical trial involving thousands of adults 60 years old or older, the vaccine reduced the risk of shingles by about half. Even if the shingles vaccine doesn't prevent you from getting shingles, it can still reduce the chance of having long-term pain.**

Talk with your healthcare professional for more information and to find out if the shingles vaccine is right for you.

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The Shingles Vaccine is a Safe Way to Protect Your Health

- **Vaccines are tested and monitored.** The shingles vaccine went through years of testing before being licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2006. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and FDA continue to monitor vaccines after they are licensed.
- **Vaccine side effects are usually mild and temporary.** In most cases, shingles vaccine causes no serious side effects. Some people experience mild reactions that last up to a few days, such as a headache or redness, soreness, swelling, or itching where the shot was given.
- **Vaccines are safe for most people.** The shingles vaccine is safe for you unless you are pregnant, have a weakened immune system, or have allergies to certain components of the vaccine. It is safe for people taking most prescription medications to get this vaccine, but ask your healthcare professional if you have any questions.

Getting vaccinated against shingles and other diseases can be easier than you think.

Talk to your healthcare professional at your next visit about what vaccines are right for you. If your healthcare professional does not offer the vaccines you need, ask for a referral so you can get the vaccines elsewhere.

Adults can get vaccines at doctors' offices, pharmacies, workplaces, community health clinics, and health departments. To find a place to get a vaccine near you, go to <http://vaccine.healthmap.org>.

Most private health insurance plans cover recommended vaccines. Check with your insurance provider for details and for a list of vaccine providers. Medicare Part D plans cover shingles vaccine, but there may be costs to you depending on your specific plan.

If you do not have health insurance, visit www.healthcare.gov to learn more about health insurance options.

Don't Wait. Vaccinate!

Talk with your healthcare professional to make sure you are up-to-date with the vaccines recommended for you.

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What Other Vaccines Do You Need?

When you get your shingles vaccine is a great time to talk with your healthcare professional about other vaccines you may need.

All adults need:

- Flu vaccine every year to protect against seasonal flu
- Tdap vaccine to protect against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough)
- Pneumococcal diseases if you are 65 years or older

There may be other vaccines recommended for you so be sure to talk with your healthcare professional.