

Shingles infection and vaccination

How does shingles affect me?

- Shingles causes a painful rash or blisters that usually occurs on one side of the face or body.
- It is caused when the virus that causes chickenpox becomes active again.
- Older people are more likely to get shingles. 1 in 2 people who live to 85 years old will get shingles.
- The rash usually goes away after 15 days.
- Sometimes the rash can affect the eye which can lead to blindness.
- Up to 1 in 5 people will develop very bad nerve pain at the site of the rash. This pain can last for more than 3 months. This pain is difficult to treat.
- People over 70 years old are more likely to have pain that persists after shingles.

How does the shingles vaccine help?

- The vaccine will protect you from getting shingles. Around 9 in 10 older people aged 70 years and over will not get shingles if they have the vaccine.
- If you still get shingles after the vaccine, you are very unlikely to get the bad nerve pain.

What is the shingles vaccine used now?

- Shingrix is the vaccine used now.
- Zostavax is not given any more.

When can I get the Shingrix vaccine?

- Shingrix should be given once you turn 65 years old or older.
- You need to get two doses of the vaccine, 2-6 months apart.

What are common side effects of the Shingrix vaccine?

- 8 in 10 people may get swelling, redness or pain at the injection site.
- 6 in 10 people may have fever, tiredness, vomiting, headache, shivering or muscle pain.
- These side effects will go away after 2 to 3 days.
- Paracetamol can help with the pain, fever, headache or muscle pain.

Should I get the Shingrix vaccine if I was given Zostavax before?

- Yes. Getting Shingrix gives you stronger protection that lasts for a longer time.
- You must wait 12 months after Zostavax before getting Shingrix.

Should I get the Shingrix vaccine if I already had shingles?

- Yes. Up to 1 in 20 people who had shingles in the past will get shingles again.
- Wait 12 months after you recover from shingles before you get the vaccine.

Should I get the Shingrix vaccine if I never had chickenpox?

- Yes. It is safe to get the vaccine even if you cannot remember having chickenpox.

Where can I get more information?

- Speak to your GP.
- Frequently asked questions on shingles vaccine are also available (in English only) – please scan the QR code:

