

Shingles (Herpes Zoster)



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[Shingles \(Herpes Zoster\) Home](#)

Get the Shingrix Vaccine If You Are 50 or Older

Shingles is a painful rash illness, which sometimes leads to long-term nerve pain. A shingles vaccine called Shingrix is the best way to help protect yourself against shingles.



If you're 50 or older, get Shingrix

- Shingrix provides strong protection from shingles and long-term nerve pain.
- Get Shingrix even if you already had shingles, because you can get the disease more than once.
- Your risk of shingles and complications increases as you age.
- You need 2 doses of Shingrix. Get the second dose 2 to 6 months after you get the first dose.

If you got a shingles vaccine in the past, still get Shingrix

- You may have already got a different shingles vaccine called Zostavax, which is no longer in use in the United States. If you did, you still need 2 doses of Shingrix.



Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about getting Shingrix.

Make a plan to get 2 doses

- You can get Shingrix at your doctor's office or pharmacy. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about getting Shingrix.
- Call your health insurance provider ahead of time to see if they will cover the vaccine.
- Plan to get your second dose of Shingrix 2 to 6 months after your first dose.

"Five years later, I still take prescription medication for pain. My shingles rash quickly developed into open, oozing sores that in only a few days required me to be hospitalized. I could not eat, sleep, or perform even the most minor tasks. It was totally debilitating. The pain still limits my activity levels to this day."

—A 63-year-old harpist who was unable to continue playing due to shingles

Shingrix is more than 90% effective at preventing shingles and long-term nerve pain.

Know the benefits and the side effects

Shingrix is more than 90% effective at preventing shingles and long-term nerve pain. You may experience some short-term side effects because Shingrix causes a strong response in your immune system.

After getting Shingrix:

- Most people had a sore arm.
- Many people had redness and swelling where they got the shot (wider than 4 inches for some people).
- Many felt tired, had muscle pain, a headache, shivering, fever, stomach pain, or nausea.

About 1 out of 6 people who got Shingrix experienced side effects that prevented them from doing regular activities like yardwork or swimming. Side effects usually go away after 2 to 3 days. Remember that the pain from shingles can last a lifetime, and these side effects should only last a few days.

Important reminders

- You may choose to take an over-the-counter pain medicine such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen after getting Shingrix to ease discomfort from side effects.
- If you get side effects after the first dose of Shingrix, you should still get the second dose to get the full protection from the vaccine. Just because you have a reaction to the first dose does not mean that you will have a reaction to the second.

Protect yourself from this painful illness



The pain from shingles has been compared to childbirth or passing a kidney stone. It can last for months or years after the rash goes away. Shingles vaccine can help prevent shingles and the complications from the disease.

Photo Courtesy M.Oxman

Know your risk of getting shingles and complications



About 1 out of every 3 people in the United States will develop shingles during their lifetime.



If you've had chickenpox, you are at risk for shingles. More than 99% of Americans born before 1980 have had chickenpox, even if they don't remember it.



Your risk of getting shingles and having serious complications increases as you get older.



About 1 in 10 people who get shingles develop nerve pain that lasts for months or years after the rash goes away. This is called postherpetic neuralgia and is the most common complication of shingles.



Shingles may lead to other serious complications involving the eye, including blindness. Very rarely, it can also lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, brain inflammation (encephalitis) or death.