

Who should be getting the shingles vaccine?



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Guest Columnist

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Shingles is a painful rash that develops on one side of the face or body. The rash consists of blisters that typically scab over in 7 to 10 days. The rash usually clears up within two to four weeks.

Before the rash develops, people often have pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash will develop. This may happen anywhere from one to five days before the rash appears.

Chickenpox and shingles are related because they are caused by the same virus (varicella zoster virus). After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays dormant (inactive) in the body. It can re-

activate years later and cause shingles.

Shingles vaccination is the only way to protect against shingles.

Shingrix provides strong protection against shingles. Two doses of Shingrix is more than 90 percent effective at preventing shingles. Protection stays above 85 percent for at least the first four years after you get vaccinated. Shingrix is the preferred vaccine, over Zostavax (zoster vaccine live), a shingles vaccine in use since 2006. Zostavax may still be used to prevent shingles in healthy adults 60 years and older.

Who should get Shingrix?

Healthy adults 50 years and older should get two doses of Shingrix, separated by two to six months. You should get Shingrix even if in the past you had shingles; received Zostavax; are not sure if you had chickenpox.

There is no maximum age for getting Shingrix. If you had shingles in the past, you can get Shingrix to help prevent future occurrences of the disease. There is no specific length of time that you need to wait after having shingles before you can receive Shingrix, but generally you should make sure the shingles rash has gone away before getting vaccinated.

You can get Shingrix whether or not you remember having had chickenpox in the past. If you had Zostavax in the recent past, you should wait at least eight weeks before getting Shingrix.

Who should not get Shingrix?

You should not get Shingrix if you:

- have ever had a severe allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or after a dose of Shingrix

- tested negative for immunity to varicella zoster virus. If you test nega-

tive, you should get chickenpox vaccine.

- currently have shingles
- currently are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- receive specific antiviral drugs (acyclovir, famciclovir, or valacyclovir) 24 hours before vaccination (avoid use of these antiviral drugs for 14 days after vaccination)- zoster vaccine live only

If you have a minor acute (starts suddenly) illness, such as a cold, you may get Shingrix. But if you have a moderate or severe acute illness, you should usually wait until you recover before getting the vaccine. This includes anyone with a temperature of 101.3°F or higher.

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