

# Herpes Zoster (Shingles) Vaccine – Shingrix

## Get protected, get immunized.

- Vaccines make your immune system stronger. They build antibodies to help prevent diseases.
- Immunization is safe. It is much safer to get immunized than to get these diseases.

## What is the Shingrix vaccine?

The Shingrix vaccine helps prevent you from developing herpes zoster, also known as shingles.

This vaccine is not a treatment for shingles or shingles nerve pain (post-herpetic neuralgia). It does not prevent chickenpox.

## What is shingles?

Shingles is a painful, blistering rash caused by the same virus as chickenpox.

Most people develop shingles in one part of the body. The blisters can last for several weeks.

The nerve pain from shingles can be severe and last for months. The pain can prevent you from doing daily activities such as walking, sleeping, or visiting with friends and family.

People with shingles may develop other problems such as scarring in the area of the rash, skin infections, weakness, loss of hearing or vision, or paralysis (being unable to move part of your body).

Some people with shingles may need to be in the hospital if they are very unwell. In very rare cases, shingles can cause death.

## How do you get shingles?

If you had chickenpox disease in the past, you can develop shingles. The virus stays in the nerve cells in your body. It can stay there for many years and not cause a problem. But for some people the virus can become active again and cause shingles, especially if you have a weak immune system or are older. It can occur more than once.

## Who is most at risk?

You are at risk for shingles if you had chickenpox in the past. Your risk for shingles is higher if you have a weak immune system or if you are over age 50 years. Your risk for shingles gets higher the older you get. You can develop shingles if you got the chickenpox vaccine, but the risk is very low.

About 1 in 3 Canadians will develop shingles.

## Who should get the Shingrix vaccine?

If you are age 18 years and older and you have had or are going to have an organ transplant, or you have had a stem cell transplant or CAR T-cell therapy (a type of cancer treatment), you may be able to get this vaccine for free. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if you can get this vaccine for free.

If you are age 50 years and older but cannot get this vaccine for free, you can still get this vaccine, but you need to pay for it.

You can get the Shingrix vaccine even if you:

- had shingles in the past
- are not sure if you had chickenpox

You need to wait 1 year after having shingles before you get the shingles vaccine.

Talk to your healthcare provider to decide if this vaccine is right for you.

## How many doses do I need?

You need 2 doses of the Shingrix vaccine. You get the second dose 2 to 6 months after the first dose. You need both doses to make sure you have long-lasting protection against shingles.

At this time, booster (extra) doses are not recommended. Research is ongoing to find out if you will need a booster dose.

## How well does the vaccine work?

If you are healthy and get both doses, the protection against shingles is about 90%. Protection lasts at least 4 years. You are also less likely to have long-term pain if you still get Shingles.

## Are there other vaccines that protect against shingles?

Zostavax is another type of vaccine that protects against shingles. It provides less protection against shingles than the Shingrix vaccine.

You can get the Shingrix vaccine if you had the Zostavax vaccine, but you need to wait at least 1 year.

## **Where can I get the Shingrix vaccine?**

If you can get the Shingrix vaccine for free, contact your local public health or community health centre.

If you want the vaccine and need to pay for it, contact a private immunization clinic. You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist if they sell the vaccine.

## **Are there side effects from the Shingrix vaccine?**

There can be side effects from the Shingrix vaccine. They tend to be mild and go away in a few days. Side effects may include:

- redness, swelling, itching or feeling sore where you had the needle
- feeling tired or unwell
- a headache
- a fever or chills
- body aches or sore joints
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), stomach pain, vomiting (throwing up), or loose stool (diarrhea)

At least 1 out of 100 people who got this vaccine reported 1 or more of these side effects. In some cases, it is unknown if the vaccine caused these side effects.

It is important to stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccine. Some people may have a rare but serious allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. If anaphylaxis happens, you will get medicine to treat the symptoms.

It is rare to have a serious side effect after a vaccine. Call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

## **How can I manage side effects?**

- To help with soreness and swelling, put a cool, wet cloth over the area where you had the needle.
- There is medicine to help with a fever or pain. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure what medicine or dose to take. Follow the directions on the package.
- Some people with health problems, such as a weak immune system, must call their doctor if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your doctor even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

## **Who should not get the Shingrix vaccine?**

You may not be able to get this vaccine if:

- You have an allergy to any part of the vaccine.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it.
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- You have shingles or had shingles in the last year.
- You had the Zostavax vaccine in the last year.

If you have allergies or have had a side effect from this vaccine in the past, check with your doctor or a public health nurse before you get the vaccine.

Although, you can get the vaccine if you have a mild illness such as a cold or fever, you should stay home until you are feeling better to prevent spreading your illness to others.

## **I have a fear of needles. How can I prepare for my immunization?**

Many adults and children are afraid of needles. You can do many things before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit [ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort](http://ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort), or call Health Link at 811 for information.

## **For more information about immunization**



Call Health Link at 811



Scan the QR code or go to [ahs.ca/immunize](http://ahs.ca/immunize)