

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 rash area, 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 have had chickenpox, 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 sometimes the virus becomes active again and causes shingles. This is more likely if you have a weakened immune system or you are older. It can happen more than once.

Who is most at risk?

You are at risk for shingles if you have ever had chickenpox. Your risk for shingles is higher if you have a weakened 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 free of charge. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if you can get this vaccine free of charge.

If you are age 50 years and older and do not have any of the conditions listed above, 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.

Are there other vaccines that protect against shingles?

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

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

See reverse for more information.

How well does the vaccine work?

If you are healthy and get both doses of Shingrix, 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 do get shingles.

Where can I get the Shingrix vaccine?

If you can get the Shingrix vaccine free of charge, 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 where you had the needle that may look red on lighter skin or purple on darker skin
- 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 watery 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 healthcare provider 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 healthcare provider if they get a fever. If you have been told to do this, call your healthcare provider even if you think the fever is from the vaccine.

Who may not be able to get the Shingrix vaccine?

You may not be able to get this vaccine if:

- You have an allergy to any part of the vaccine. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about any allergies you may have.
- You had a severe (serious) or unusual side effect after this vaccine or one like it.
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding/chestfeeding.
- You have shingles or had shingles in the last year.
- You had the Zostavax vaccine in the last year.

If any of these apply, check with your healthcare provider before you get the vaccine.

Although, you can get the vaccine if you have a mild illness such as a cold or fever, it is best to stay home until you feel 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. There are things you can do before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable.



Scan the QR code, visit ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort, or call Health Link at 811 for information.

For more information about immunization



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Scan the QR code or go to ahs.ca/immunize