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Aged 70 - 79?

Get vaccinated against

SHINGLES



If you are aged between 70 and 79
there is a free vaccine to help protect
you from shingles

Shingles is an infection that affects many people as they get older. It often causes severe pain, which can last for months or sometimes years.

Shingles is more common and more severe the older you are.

Around one in 1,000 people over 70 who gets shingles dies of the infection.

The shingles vaccine helps protect older people from shingles and the long-term pain that can follow.

If you are aged 70 to 79 and haven't had a shingles vaccine, contact your GP surgery and make an appointment. Don't miss out – it could prevent years of pain.

About shingles



Shingles (also known as herpes zoster) is an infection of a nerve and the skin around it.

It often starts with some tingling and pain in one area, along with a headache and tiredness. This is usually followed by a painful rash of fluid-filled blisters a few days later. The blisters then burst and turn into sores. The rash usually affects an area on just one side of the body, most commonly the chest but sometimes the head, face or eye. It can be painful and very itchy.

When shingles affects the eye, or the skin around the eye, it can cause severe pain or problems with your sight.

Most people recover fully from shingles, but for some people the pain can last for months or even years. This long-lasting pain is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN).

PHN is difficult to treat, and the older you are the more likely you are to have PHN that is severe.

What causes shingles?

Shingles is caused by the same virus as chickenpox – the varicella zoster virus.

Almost everyone gets chickenpox at some time in their life. When you recover from chickenpox, most of the virus is destroyed, but some of it can survive and remain inactive in the body for many years. This virus can then reactivate later in life and cause shingles. This generally happens when the immune system is weakened by things such as age, illness, stress or medication. The shingles vaccine helps to protect you by boosting your immunity.



How do you catch shingles?

You don't catch shingles. It is caused when the chickenpox virus caught earlier in life reactivates.

However, the fluid in shingles blisters is infectious and can cause chickenpox in someone who has never had it (usually a child).

How common is shingles?

About one in four people will get shingles at some time.

Every year in England and Wales, tens of thousands of people get shingles. It is most common in older people, many of whom develop long-lasting pain.

About the shingles vaccine

Zostavax is the name of the shingles vaccine used in the UK.

The shingles vaccine will reduce your chances of developing shingles by more than a third. If you do go on to have shingles, it will probably be a milder and shorter illness if you've had the vaccine.

Who should have the vaccine?

People aged 70 to 79 should have a shingles vaccine.

If you are 70 years old and have not had a shingles vaccine before, you can have a free shingles vaccine. You will remain eligible for the vaccine until your 80th birthday.

You only need the vaccine once. You do not need it every year.

What about people who are outside the 70 to 79 age group?

Shingles is less common in younger people, so people under 70 will not routinely get the vaccine. However, some people aged 50 to 69 may be offered the vaccination if they are going to have treatment that weakens the immune system.

The vaccine is less effective as people get older, so those aged 80 and over will not routinely get the vaccine.

Do I need the vaccine if I've had shingles before?

Yes. Even if you've already had shingles you should still get the vaccine as it will reduce your risk of getting shingles again.

Are there people who shouldn't have a shingles vaccination?

Zostavax is a live vaccine, so if you have a weakened immune system (for example due to certain cancer, or other, treatments, blood disorders such as leukaemia or lymphoma, or because you take steroid tablets or have had a transplant), you may not be able to have the vaccine. If you think this may apply to you, discuss it with your hospital specialist, GP or practice nurse.

Anyone who has previously had a severe reaction to anything used in the vaccine should not have it.

Your GP or practice nurse will check the vaccine is suitable for you before giving it to you.

Where is the vaccination given?

Most people will have the vaccination at their GP surgery. It is an injection given in the upper arm.

How safe is the vaccine?

The shingles vaccine has been thoroughly tested and meets UK and European safety and licensing standards. It has been used routinely across the UK since 2013, and also widely in other countries, including the United States of America and Canada.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects from this vaccine are usually quite mild and don't last long.

The most common side effects following a shingles vaccine are headache, and redness, pain, swelling, itching, warmth or bruising at the site of the injection.

If the side effects last for more than a few days you should discuss this with your GP or practice nurse.

Rarely, a rash of small blisters develops where the injection was given. If this happens, cover the rash until it crusts over and avoid contact with newborn babies and anyone with a weakened immune system or who is pregnant, especially if they have never had chickenpox.

Other side effects are very rare.

You can find information on reporting side effects at www.yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk or call the Yellow Card Hotline on **0808 100 3352** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm).

Does the shingles vaccine contain pork (porcine) gelatine?

Yes. Zostavax, the shingles vaccine used in the UK, contains small traces of pork gelatine.

Gelatine is a substance used in a wide variety of foods and medicines, including some capsules and vaccines.

Many faith groups, including Muslim and Jewish communities, have approved the use of vaccines that contain gelatine.

What do I need to do next?

Your GP practice may get in touch with you to invite you to make an appointment. If they don't, or you think you might have missed the invitation, contact them and tell them you think you are due for a shingles vaccine.

You can have the shingles vaccine at any time of the year, including when you have your flu vaccine.

Where can I get more information?

You can find out more about the vaccine, including its contents and possible side effects, at www.medicines.org.uk/emc by entering the name of the vaccine in the search box. The name of the vaccine is Zostavax.

For more information, visit www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

If you have any questions, or want more information, talk to your doctor or nurse or call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47** (or call 111 if this service is available in your area).

A schedule showing which immunisations are routinely offered in Wales is available from www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/vaccinations/Leaflets

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit:

**[www.publichealthwales.org/
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To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit:

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