

Shingles Vaccines

Shingles is a viral infection that is caused by the Varicella virus; it is also the virus that causes chicken pox. The infection presents as a rash that attacks the nerve endings under your skin. The rash can be painful and leave chronic pain along the area where the rash was, long after the rash has healed. This pain is known as post herpetic neuralgia (PHN). This pain can range from mild to severe and can be quite debilitating.



In 2006, the Shingles vaccine, was marketed as Zostavax for people 60 years of age and up. It had limitations and had variable effectiveness at preventing Shingles. It was effective in preventing Shingles by 51% and preventing post herpetic neuralgia (PHN) by 67%. Protection lasts approximately 5 years.

Today, there is a new Shingles vaccine that has a greater effectiveness; it is known as Shingrix. It is a 2-step vaccine that carries a more reliable effectiveness. It is 97% effective in preventing shingles and 95% effective in preventing post herpetic neuralgia (PHN) in people ages 50-69. For people 70+ in age it has 91% effectiveness against Shingles and 89% effectiveness in preventing the PHN.

Who can receive the Shingrix? Anyone over the age of 50.

What are the side effects of Shingrix? Mild to moderate soreness, swelling and redness at site of injection. Some people felt tired, had muscle pain, a headache, shivering, fever, stomach pain, or nausea. Side effects are transient and are resolved in 2-3 days.

Can I receive the Shingrix Vaccine if I have already received Zostavax? YES

Can I receive the Shingrix or Zostavax vaccines if I have already had Shingles? YES

How Can I Pay for Shingles Vaccines? There are several ways:

Medicare – Depending on your plan, the cost will vary and there may be a co pay so check with your insurance company. Medicare Part B does not cover the shingles vaccine.

Medicaid Medicaid may or may not cover the vaccine. Contact your insurer to find out.

Private health insurance Most private health insurance plans cover the vaccine for people 60 years of age or older. Some plans cover the vaccine for people 50-59.

Vaccine assistance programs – Ask your Physician, may be available through GlaxoSmithKline