

# Infection Prevention and You



## Herpes Zoster vaccine—Protection that adds up!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 out of every 3 people in the United States will develop shingles (Herpes Zoster). Sometimes it's simply called Zoster. People with shingles develop a painful skin rash. Shingles can also cause symptoms, such as fever and headache. Rarely, the infection can lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, brain inflammation (encephalitis) or death.

### The CDC recommends that you receive the shingles (Zostavax) vaccine if you are:

- 60 years old or older
  - Not pregnant
  - Never had a life-threatening or severe allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of shingles vaccine
  - Do **NOT** have a weakened immune system because of:
    - HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system
    - Treatment with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids
    - Cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy
    - A history of cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma
  - Have not received the shingles (Zostavax) vaccine

For about one in five people, severe pain from shingles can continue even long after the rash clears up. This is called **post-herpetic neuralgia**. Anyone who has ever had chickenpox may develop shingles. The risk for developing shingles increases as people age, however, even children can get shingles. Those at greatest risk of disease are individuals who have medical conditions that alter their immune system, such as certain cancers and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). These individuals should discuss the possibility of receiving shingles vaccine with their primary care physician at a later time.

The Zostavax vaccine is a one-time vaccination. Even if you have had shingles in the past, you can still receive the vaccine to protect against future occurrences. The vaccine can reduce post herpetic neuralgia in people who get shingles after being vaccinated.

Studies have shown that the shingles vaccine has reduced the risk of shingles by 50 percent. In addition, the shingles vaccine is very safe. The vaccine has been licensed since 2006 and no serious problems have been identified. Like other vaccines, common side effects were redness, soreness or itching at the injection site, and headache. Some people may develop a blistered rash around the site where they were vaccinated. The CDC also confirms that it is safe to be around children, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems after receiving the vaccine.

## Protection from shingles with one vaccine—it's simply good math!

### Additional Resources

CDC. Shingles Vaccination: What you Need to Know. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/vacc-need-know.htm>  
Immunization Action Coalition. Ask the Experts-Shingles [http://www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts\\_zos.asp](http://www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts_zos.asp)

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