

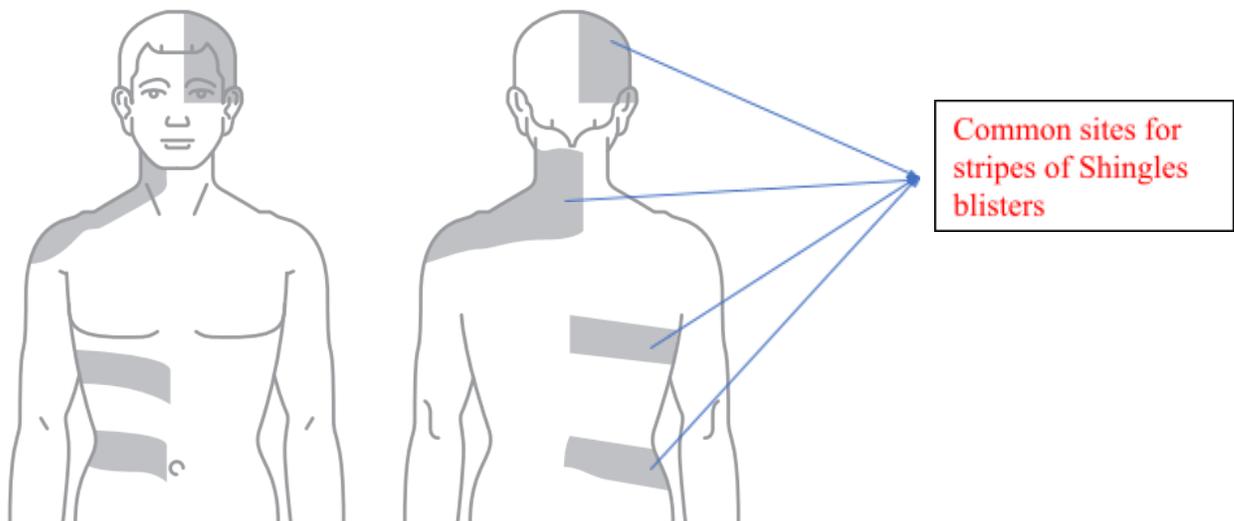
# FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT SHINGLES

## *What are Shingles?*

Shingles is a painful rash caused by a viral infection. Although shingles can arise anywhere on your body, it is most commonly seen as a single stripe of blisters that wraps across your chest on either the left or right side (National Foundation for Infectious diseases, 2020).

The *varicella-zoster virus (VZV)* causes shingles, which is the same virus that causes chickenpox. The virus remains inactive in nerve tissue near your spinal cord and brain after you've had chickenpox. The virus can return as shingles years later.

## Common sites for shingles infection



Shingles isn't life-threatening, but it may be excruciatingly painful. Vaccines can help to lower the risk of developing shingles.

## *What are the symptoms of Shingles?*

According to the National Institute on Aging (n.d.), the symptoms of shingles usually affect only a small section of one side of your body. These may include:

- Pain, burning, numbness or tingling
- Sensitivity to touch
- A red rash that begins a few days after the pain

- Fluid-filled blisters that break open and crust over
- Itching

You may think the pain is coming from organs located in the same area such as your heart, gallbladder, appendix, or kidney until the rash appears. Sometimes the shingles rash occurs around one eye or on one side of the neck or face. Some people also have symptoms that aren't specific to shingles, such as: fever, chills, headache. It may take 4 weeks or longer for your symptoms to go away.

### ***Who is at risk for developing Shingles?***

Anyone who's had chickenpox or received the chickenpox vaccine can get shingles. The CDC (2019) estimates that over 99% of people in the United States born before 1980 have had chickenpox and have VZV in their bodies.

A weakened immune system is the main factor associated with getting shingles, because it allows VZV to reactivate.

Age is the factor most associated with the strength of the immune system. You're most likely to get shingles if you're 50 or older. In addition, disease severity and likelihood of complications increase with age starting around 50.

As you get older, you're more likely to have one or more of the following things that weaken your immunity:

- Natural age-related decline in immunity
- Diseases and conditions that attack your immune system, such as HIV
- Autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, and lupus
- People who underwent bone marrow transplants and kidney transplants

### ***Are Shingles Contagious?***

Yes, Shingles is contagious. A person with shingles can pass the varicella-zoster virus to anyone who isn't immune to chickenpox. This usually occurs through direct contact with the open sores of the shingles rash. Once infected, the person will develop chickenpox, however, not shingles (National Shingles Foundation, n.d.).

Until your shingles blisters scab over, you are contagious and should avoid physical contact with anyone who hasn't yet had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine.

## ***Is there a VACCINE for Shingles?***

In 2017, the FDA approved a new vaccine for shingles, ***Shingrix***, that is 90 percent effective at protecting against the virus (Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP), 2021).

Shingrix is made from a single protein that comes from the outer shell of the herpes zoster virus, rather than a weakened form of the whole virus.

There is another vaccine called Zostavax approved by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2006. Zostavax is a live vaccine and is no longer available for use in the United States, as of November 18, 2020 (CDC, 2020).

## ***Who should get the Shingrix vaccine?***

Shingrix is the best way to help protect yourself against shingles.

If you are 50 years or older – Get the vaccine

- You need two doses of Shingrix vaccine for long-term protection.
- Get the second dose of Shingrix vaccine in 2-6 months after your first dose.
- Get the vaccine even if you suffered from Shingles previously as shingles can occur more than once

Even if you had a Shingles vaccine in the past, still get two doses of Shingrix vaccine.

Get the Shingrix vaccine if you have any health conditions like kidney disease, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic respiratory disease or taking immuno-suppressant therapy.

## ***Why get Vaccinated?***

Rarely, shingles can lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, brain inflammation and death.

The most common complication of shingles is long-term nerve pain called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN). PHN occurs in the areas where the shingles rash was, even after the rash clears up. It can last for months or years after the rash goes away. The pain from PHN can be severe and debilitating.

A shingles vaccine may help prevent shingles and vaccination certainly decreases your risk of developing shingles.

Two doses of Shingrix provides strong protection against shingles and postherpetic neuralgia.

*According to CDC (2018)*, in adults 50 to 69 years old who got two doses, Shingrix was 97% effective in preventing shingles; among adults 70 years and older, Shingrix was 91% effective.

In adults 50 to 69 years old who got two doses, Shingrix was 91% effective in preventing PHN; among adults 70 years and older, Shingrix was 89% effective.

Since your risk of shingles and PHN increases as you get older, it is important to have strong protection against shingles in your older years.

### ***How to pay for Shingles' vaccine?***

There are several ways shingles vaccine may be paid for:

#### Medicare

- Medicare Part D plans cover the shingles vaccine, but there may be a cost to you depending on your plan (Medicare, n.d.).
- Most patients with Medicare Part D, pay an out-of-pocket cost of less than \$50 per dose (SHINGRIX, n.d.).
- 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

- Many private health insurance plans will cover the vaccine, but there may be a cost to you depending on your plan. Contact your insurer to find out.
- 90% of privately insured patients pay no or limited out-of-pocket costs with the **average cost being less than \$5 per dose** (SHINGRIX, n.d.).

### ***Talk with your Healthcare provider.***

Tell your provider if the person getting the vaccine:

- Has had an allergic reaction after a previous dose of recombinant shingles vaccine, or has any severe, life-threatening allergies.

- Is pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Is currently experiencing an episode of shingles.

In some cases, your health care provider may decide to postpone receiving the shingles vaccination to a future visit.

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