



Shingles Vaccine

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), shingles, or *herpes zoster*, affects nearly one million Americans each year ⁽¹⁾. Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. Anyone who has ever had chickenpox is at risk for developing shingles ⁽¹⁾.

Shingles is a blister-like skin rash that usually appears on one side of the face or body. Severe pain is the main symptom and can continue even after the rash has faded. Other symptoms of shingles include fever, headache, chills and nausea. Very rarely, shingles can lead to more serious health concerns, such as pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, brain swelling, or death ^(1, 2).

About one in three people will develop shingles in their lifetime. The best way to reduce your risk of developing shingles is by getting the shingles vaccine. Clinical trials have shown a 64% reduction in shingles in persons aged 60-69 who receive the vaccine ^(1, 2).

Even if you have had shingles, the CDC recommends anyone over the age of 60 be vaccinated ⁽¹⁾.

While there have not been any serious problems reported with the shingles vaccine, there are some common side effects. These include ⁽¹⁾:

- Redness, swelling, or itching at the injection site
- Headache

People with certain conditions should check with their doctor before getting the shingles vaccine. These conditions include ⁽²⁾:

- Life-threatening allergies to gelatin, neomycin, or any component of the shingles vaccine
- A weakened immune system due to certain diseases or conditions, or treatment using radiation, chemotherapy, or high-dose steroids
- Active, untreated tuberculosis
- Pregnancy

For more information on the shingles vaccine, please visit the following web-links:

Shingles Vaccine Information:

- [Shingles Vaccine Information Statement](#)
- [Shingles Interactive Tutorial](#)
- [Shingles Vaccine- General Questions about the Shingles Vaccine](#)

References:

1. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
2. [U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health.](#)

Author: Karen Hulsmeier, R.N.