

## SHINGLES VACCINATION FACTS

By Carol Drufva, Clinical Compliance Manager

There are currently two different brands of shingles vaccine on the market in the U.S.: Shingrix and Zostavax. This newsletter contains information on who should be vaccinated and important differences between the two products.

Zostavax was the first shingles vaccine produced. It has been available in the U.S. since 2006. It is recommended that one dose be administered to healthy adults aged 60 years and older. It is given by subcutaneous injection and immunity lasts for about five years. Most common side effects: pain, redness and swelling at injection site; headache.

Shingrix entered the market towards the end of 2017. Because its immune response lasts at least nine years following vaccination, it is the preferred shingles vaccine. Vaccination with Shingrix is recommended for people aged 50 years and older, and dosing consists of two intramuscular injections given two to six months apart. However, current demand exceeds the supply and, although the manufacturer (Glaxo Smith Kline) has ramped up production, supply issues are anticipated to continue through 2019. The manufacturer recommends consumers check availability at <https://www.shingrix.com/shingles-vaccine-locator.html>.

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### What is Shingles?

- Shingles is a viral infection (*Herpes zoster*) caused by reactivation of the chickenpox virus (*Varicella zoster*).
- It is a painful skin rash that can result in debilitating nerve pain (postherpetic neuralgia) lasting for months or even years.
- In rare cases, serious hearing or eye conditions may occur.

### Who is at risk?

- Anyone who has previously had chickenpox but, because natural immunity declines with age, your risk for shingles increases as you get older.
- It is estimated that one third of the U.S. population will get shingles.

### Is Shingles preventable?

- Yes, it is preventable by vaccination.



Most common side effects: pain, redness and swelling at injection site; headache; fever; stomach upset; muscle pain; tiredness; shivering.

### DECIDING IF SHINGLES VACCINE IS RIGHT FOR YOU

Vaccination with Shingrix or Zostavax is recommended even if you have had shingles or chicken pox in the past. However, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that a patient with shingles wait until their symptoms (such as the rash) have subsided before being vaccinated.

Generally, either of these shingles vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccinations – flu, pneumonia and Tdap. In addition, it is also okay to get Shingrix vaccine after Zostavax; however, at least 8 weeks must have elapsed since the Zostavax was given.

Per the CDC, shingles vaccines can safely be given to patients on low-level immunosuppressive therapy (less than 20mg of Prednisone (or its equivalent) daily). Shingles vaccine should not, however, be given to patients with weakened immune systems or patients who are taking high doses of steroids. In addition, with Zostavax, women should not become pregnant for at least four weeks after getting the vaccine.

### Treatment Options for Shingles

- pain relief
- antiviral medications such as Acyclovir or Valacyclovir

#### References:

Clinical Resource, Shingles Vaccine: FAQs. Pharmacist's Letter/Prescriber's Letter. December 2017

Article, Answer Questions About the New Shingles Vaccine Shingrix, Pharmacist's Letter, April 2018  
<https://www.shingrix.com>

Product information for Zostavax. Merck & Co., Inc., Whitehouse Station, NJ August 2018

