



Aged between 70 and 79 on 1 September 2016?*

A vaccine to help
protect against
shingles



**Information
valid from
1 September 2016
until
31 August 2017**



* If your birthday is between 2/9/1936 and 1/9/1940, or between 2/9/1942 and 1/9/1946, you may be eligible to get the vaccine this year.



**Healthier
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Shingles (also known as herpes zoster) can be very painful and is more common among older people. The older you are, the worse it can be. For some people, the pain can last for many years.

Unlike other infectious illnesses, you can't catch shingles from someone else. Instead, if you've ever had chickenpox, the virus that causes shingles lies inactive in your body and can become active again later in life.

There is a vaccine that can reduce your risk of getting shingles, or, if you do get shingles, it can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.

This leaflet describes shingles and the benefits of the vaccine.

What causes shingles?

Shingles is caused by a virus called varicella zoster, the same virus that causes chickenpox. When you recover from chickenpox most of this virus is destroyed, but some survives and lies inactive in your body's nervous system. The virus can then become active again later in life, when your immune system has been weakened by age, stress, illness or certain treatments that can reduce your immunity.

The shingles vaccine protects you by boosting your immunity.

Visit immunisationscotland.org.uk/shingles

What are the symptoms of shingles?

When the chickenpox virus becomes active again as shingles, it usually infects a specific nerve and the area of skin around it. The infection causes a rash with very painful blisters that are filled with fluid. The blisters can burst and will eventually crust over and heal.

These blisters usually appear on a specific part of one side of the body, usually on the chest, but sometimes they also affect the head, face and eyes.

How long does shingles last and how serious is it?

The shingles rash usually appears a few days after the pain begins and lasts for about a week, but the pain can last much longer. And the older you are, the more likely you are to have long-lasting pain. In some cases, the pain persists for several months or even years – this is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN). Current treatments for PHN are not very effective, but the shingles vaccine reduces the risk of getting shingles and PHN.

How common is shingles?

In Scotland around 7000 people aged 70 years and over get shingles every year. Between 700 and 1400 of these people develop PHN and around 600 are admitted to hospital for treatment.

So the vaccine could prevent many people from getting shingles and PHN, and reduce the number of people who are treated in hospital.

How do you catch shingles?

You can't catch shingles. It is caused when the chickenpox virus (caught when you were younger) becomes active again in your nerves later in your life. We don't know exactly why, but it might be because immunity (protection against infection and disease) is lower in older people and in those who are stressed or have a condition that affects the immune system, such as cancer.

You can't catch shingles from someone who has chickenpox. But if you have shingles blisters then the virus in the fluid can infect someone who hasn't had chickenpox (usually a child) and they may develop chickenpox.

How does the vaccine work?

The vaccine contains a weakened form of the virus that causes shingles. Because it is weakened it does not cause the illness. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so the next time it becomes active again in your body you will fight it off more easily. This can reduce your risk of developing shingles or, if you do get shingles, it can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.

How effective is the vaccine?

The vaccine will reduce your chances of developing shingles by more than a third. If you do go on to have shingles, the symptoms will be milder and will not last as long as they would have if you had not been immunised.

Where is the vaccine given?

Like most immunisations, the vaccine will be given as an injection in your upper arm. You only need one injection.

Will there be any side effects?

Side effects are usually quite mild and don't last very long. The most common side effects, which affect at least 1 in 10 people, include headaches as well as redness or tenderness where the injection was given.

If you have side effects that last for more than a few days, make an appointment to see your GP or practice nurse.

How safe is the vaccine?

Before they are allowed to be used, all medicines (including vaccines) are tested to assess their safety and effectiveness. Once they have been licensed for use, their safety continues to be monitored.

I have had shingles before, should I still get the vaccine?

Yes. Even if you have already had shingles, you could still get it again. The vaccine will reduce your risk of getting shingles again. Or, if you do get shingles, it can reduce how serious the symptoms will be. Let your GP or practice nurse know that you've had shingles before.

When will I get the vaccine?

Once you're eligible (see page 6) you should contact your GP practice to make an appointment to get the vaccine. While you can have this vaccine at any time of year, many patients get the vaccine at the same time that they get their seasonal flu vaccine.

Who will get the vaccine?

People are eligible for the shingles vaccine in the year that they turn 70. There is also a 'catch-up' programme for people who missed out on the vaccine in previous years.

See the table to find out if you are eligible for this year's vaccine.

People aged 74 and 75, who are not eligible this year, will be offered the vaccine in the future.

Age on 1 September 2016	Eligible?
70	Yes
71	Yes
72	Yes
73	Yes
74	Not yet
75	Not yet
76	Yes
77	Yes
78	Yes
79	Yes

If you are eligible, contact your GP to make an appointment to get your vaccine.

You can also visit our website and see if you are eligible to get the vaccine using the simple online calculator:

immunisationscotland.org.uk/shingles

People aged 80 and over will not be offered the shingles immunisation because the vaccine is less effective as people get older.

Do I need the vaccine every year?

No. This is a one-off vaccine and you do not need it again.

Are there reasons why I shouldn't get the vaccine?

You should not have the shingles vaccine if you:

- have a weakened immune system (for example, due to certain cancer treatments; blood disorders such as leukaemia or lymphoma; taking steroid tablets; or you've had a transplant) – if you think this may apply, discuss this with your hospital specialist or GP
- have had a severe reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine or to a previous dose of the chickenpox vaccine
- have an untreated tuberculosis (TB) infection.

Most medications can be taken at the same time as the shingles vaccine. Your GP will tell you whether any of this applies to you and can discuss any concerns.

The shingles vaccine contains a small trace of **pork gelatine**. Gelatine is a common and essential ingredient in many medicines, including some vaccines. Many faith groups, including Muslim and Jewish communities, have approved the use of gelatine-containing vaccines. It is, however, an individual choice whether or not you get the shingles vaccine. Currently, there is no alternative shingles vaccine that doesn't contain pork gelatine.

Where can I get more information?

Talk to your practice nurse or GP, or call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88). The helpline is open every day from 8 am to 10 pm and also provides an interpreting service.

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines by visiting **yellowcard.gov.uk** or by calling the Yellow Card hotline on **0808 100 3352**.

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healthscotland.com

Traditional Chinese

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Polish

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Urdu

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