

[Home](#) > [Immunization Program](#) > [Diseases](#) > [Shingles](#)<https://ldh.la.gov/page/shingles>

Shingles

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is a painful rash illness caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person has chickenpox, the virus remains inactive in the body and can reactivate later in life, causing shingles.

About one in three people in the United States will develop shingles during their lifetime. Most people develop shingles only once, but it is possible to have it more than once.

A person cannot catch shingles from someone who has shingles. However, someone who has never had chickenpox or received the chickenpox vaccine can become infected with VZV through direct contact with fluid from shingles blisters or by breathing in virus particles from the blisters. That person would develop chickenpox, not shingles, but could develop shingles later in life.

Shingles is more common in older people. Children who have had chickenpox can get shingles, but the risk increases with age. Covering the infected area is usually enough to protect the virus from spreading.

Symptoms

Shingles usually causes a painful, itchy or tingling rash on one side of the face or body. Before the rash appears, a person may experience pain, itching or tingling in the area where the rash will develop. Some people may also have a fever.

The rash usually appears as a stripe of blisters on the left or right side of the body or on one side of the face. The blisters typically scab over within seven to 10 days, and the rash usually clears within two to four weeks.

The most common complication of shingles is postherpetic neuralgia, or PHN. PHN causes severe nerve pain in the area where the rash occurred and can continue for months or years after the rash clears. About 10% to 18% of people who develop shingles also experience PHN, and the risk increases with age.

Although rare, shingles can also cause other serious complications, including:

- Vision loss when shingles affects the eye
- Bacterial infection of the rash
- [Pneumonia](#)
- Hearing problems
- Encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain
- Death, although this is very rare

Other symptoms of shingles include:

- Fever and chills
- Headache
- Upset stomach

The shingles vaccine may help prevent shingles.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should get the shingles vaccine

Your Health. Your Questions. Your Care.

Vaccination recommendations are designed to guide care, but every person and every family is different. We encourage you to have an open conversation with your healthcare provider about your health history, concerns and questions. Together, through shared clinical decision-making, you can create a vaccination plan that is informed, personalized and right for you or your child.

Shingrix, also called recombinant zoster vaccine or RZV, is recommended to prevent shingles and related complications.

CDC recommends two doses of Shingrix for:

- Adults 50 years of age and older
- Adults 19 years of age and older who have or will have weakened immune systems because of a disease or medical treatment

For most people, the second dose should be given two to six months after the first dose. Adults with weakened immune systems who would benefit from completing the series sooner may receive the second dose one to two months after the first.

People should receive Shingrix even if they:

- Have had shingles before
- Previously received Zostavax, an older shingles vaccine that is no longer available in the United States
- Do not remember whether they had chickenpox

There is no required waiting period after a previous case of shingles, but the vaccine should not be given during an active shingles episode.

Is the shingles vaccine safe?

Studies show that Shingrix is safe and provides strong protection against shingles and its most common complication, PHN.

Among adults with healthy immune systems, Shingrix was:

- 97% effective at preventing shingles in adults 50 to 69 years of age
- 91% effective at preventing shingles in adults 70 years of age and older
- About 89% to 91% effective at preventing PHN in adults 50 years of age and older

Among adults with weakened immune systems, effectiveness against shingles ranged from 68% to 91%, depending on the condition affecting the immune system.

Shingrix may cause temporary side effects that can affect normal daily activities. These reactions usually last two to three days.

Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given
- Muscle pain
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Chills or shivering
- Fever
- Upset stomach

Severe allergic reactions are rare. People should talk with a healthcare provider about their health history, possible precautions and the vaccination schedule that is right for them.

Additional Resources

- [Shingles Fact \(CDC\)](#)
- [Infographic: Age 50 and over? Get the shingles vaccine!](#) (NIH)
- [Shingles Vaccination](#) (CDC)