



GRANOVSKY GLUSKIN
FAMILY MEDICINE CENTRE

Family Health Team

SHINGLES VACCINATION INFORMATION SHEET*

1. What is shingles?

Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you have had chickenpox, the virus remains inactive in the nerve cells of the body. Later in life, the virus can reactivate as shingles. Symptoms of shingles include headache, fever and a painful rash that develops on one side of the face or body. The rash forms blisters, eventually scabs over and clears up within two to four weeks. About 1 in 5 people who get shingles may have severe pain that lasts months to years after the rash has cleared. This is known as post-herpetic neuralgia. The occurrence and severity of shingles and its complications increase with age or low immunity.

2. Who should be vaccinated against shingles?

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization currently advises that shingles vaccination could be offered to anyone 50 years of age and older.

3. Who should NOT receive shingles vaccination?

Please speak with your health care provider if you have an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment (e.g. on cancer chemotherapy or medications that suppress the immune system); have active, untreated tuberculosis; or have had a life-threatening reaction to any vaccine components.

4. What shingles vaccines are available in Canada?

There are 2 shingles vaccines approved for use: Zostavax II® and Shingrix®.

Zostavax II® (previously known as Zostavax®) has been available since 2009. This vaccine is a "live" vaccine that contains a weakened form of the virus that does not

cause disease. Zostavax II® can reduce the risk of shingles by about 50-60%, but is less effective in older persons. It requires ONE dose only. Common side effects include soreness, redness, swelling, itching, or a rash where the vaccine was given. Zostavax II® is covered by OHIP for persons between the ages of 65 to 70 years. For everyone else, the cost of the vaccine is about \$210.

Shingrix® is a new shingles vaccine available January 2018. This vaccine is an “inactivated” vaccine that contains an “adjuvant” – this is a component that boosts the response to the vaccine to improve how effective it is. Shingrix® can reduce the risk of shingles by over 90%, even in older persons. It requires TWO doses; we suggest at our clinic that these doses be given 3 months apart (though the second dose may be given anytime between 2 to 6 months, based on convenience). Common side effects are similar to Zostavax II®, but also include muscle pain where the vaccine was given, headache and fever. These side effects may be bothersome and last up to 3 days. Shingrix® is NOT covered by OHIP. The cost of two doses of the vaccine is about \$310. The Shingrix® vaccine is typically preferred over Zostavax® because it is a more effective vaccine.

5. If I have already had shingles, do I need shingles vaccination?

Current Canadian guidelines suggest shingles vaccination may be offered at least 1 year after an episode of shingles, to ensure ongoing protection.

6. If I already received Zostavax II®, should I get the new Shingrix® vaccine?

Current Canadian guidelines suggest Shingrix® vaccination may be offered at least 1 year after the administration of Zostavax II® to ensure ongoing protection.

If you wish to learn more about shingles vaccination, please speak with your health care provider at your next scheduled visit.

*Approved by the Mount Sinai Academic Family Health Team Patient Care Committee Nov 29, 2017.
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