

# PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST SHINGLES



**Canadian Coalition  
for Immunization Awareness  
& Promotion (CCIAP)**  
[immunize.ca](http://immunize.ca)

## GIVE YOUR IMMUNITY A BOOST!



### What is shingles? .....

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is a painful disease that results from the reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. The virus may lie dormant for many years after chickenpox clears up until – for unknown reasons – it becomes active again and causes shingles.

### How can I tell if I have shingles? .....

You may feel itching, tingling, burning or pain in a specific area of the body, typically on one side of the body or face, prior to the appearance of a blistering rash. For most people, the pain associated with the shingles rash usually lessens as it heals. For some, however, shingles can cause severe pain after the rash has healed, which can last for months – or even years. This long-term pain is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN). Other complications associated with shingles include skin infections and scarring, interfering with normal day-to-day activities such as walking, sleeping, and social activities.

### Am I at risk for shingles? .....

Approximately 90% of Canadians have had chickenpox and are at risk for shingles.<sup>1</sup> The risk increases as you get older. You may be at risk for shingles even if you have already been immunized against chickenpox.\*

### How can I protect myself against shingles? .....

• A single dose of the herpes zoster vaccine can protect against shingles.

### Who should get the vaccine? .....

- Adults 60 years of age and older
- People aged 50 to 60 may benefit from this vaccine and should speak to their doctor about the pros and cons of receiving the vaccine.

### Who should NOT get the vaccine? .....

- Adults with a weakened immune system
- Adults allergic to the components of the vaccine, including gelatin or neomycin
- Adults with untreated tuberculosis
- Pregnant women

**Talk to your doctor about the shingles vaccine.**

## Immunization is not just for kids!

### Other recommended adult immunizations<sup>2</sup>:

- Td (tetanus booster every 10 years)
- Influenza
- Pneumococcal
- Travel vaccines as needed

### Other CCIAP resources:

- Adult Immunization Record
- Top 10 Reasons to Ask about Adult Immunization
- What Vaccines Do You Need?
- Do I Need Any Vaccinations Today? (questionnaire)
- Immunization Information on the Internet: Can You Trust What You Read?

**To obtain resources and other information about immunization, contact:**

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<sup>1</sup>National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NAC). Update on varicella. Can Commun Dis Rep 2004, 30: 1-26 (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/04vol30/acs-dcc-1/index-eng.php>)

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Immunization Guide, Seventh Edition, 2006. Online at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/p03-02-eng.php>

\*The varicella (chickenpox) vaccine does not protect against herpes zoster (shingles).

