

Inactivated Shingles Vaccine

Vaccination,
the best protection

November 2022

Vaccination is the best protection against shingles and its complications. Shingles only appears in people who have already contracted varicella (chicken pox). Shingles is the result of the varicella virus being reactivated, as if varicella developed in a nerve. Shingles occurs at any age, but more frequently among the elderly. You cannot catch shingles from someone who has it. You can, however, catch varicella, if you haven't had it, by direct contact with a shingle's lesion.

Disease	Signs and symptoms	Possible complications
Shingles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Painful skin rash on one side of the body along the path of a or few nerves, lasting 2 to 3 weeks• Skin rash and tiny blisters that break and form a crust in the painful area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scars• Infected blisters• Pain for several months along the path of the affected nerves (neuralgia)• Impaired vision if the shingles affects the face• Infection over the whole body• Death

The vaccine

Vaccination is the best protection against shingles and its complications. The inactivated vaccine is recommended for people age 50 and older and for people with weakened immune systems aged 18 to 49. It is approximately 89% effective in preventing shingles for at least 10 years, and this effectiveness is not reduced with age. When shingles occurs despite vaccination, the risk of neuralgia is reduced by 90%. Two doses of vaccine are required for the best possible protection.

Symptoms after vaccination

Some symptoms may be caused by the vaccine (e.g. redness at the injection site, fever, headache). Other problems may occur by chance and are not related to the vaccine (e.g. cold, gastro).

In 17% of cases, reactions caused by the vaccine prevent normal everyday activity for 1 to 2 days. These reactions are less frequent in older people. They are a little more frequent after the 2nd dose.

Inactivated shingles vaccine is safe. Most reactions are harmless and do not last long.

Frequency	Possible reactions to the vaccine	What to do
In most cases (more than 50% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain at the injection site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply a cold, damp compress at the injection site.• Use a medication for fever or discomfort if needed.• See a doctor if symptoms are severe.
Very often (less than 50% of people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redness and swelling at the injection site• Muscle soreness, fatigue, headache, fever, shivering• Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain• Reactions preventing daily activities	

There appears to be a small risk of developing Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) after receiving the inactivated shingles vaccine. This risk would be about 3 extra cases in one million people vaccinated. However, after herpes zoster, the risk of GBS would be 4 to 18 times compared to an expected frequency for GBS in the adult population. This syndrome causes progressive, reversible paralysis, which can sometimes leave permanent effects. The cause of GBS is unknown. Most cases occur after an intestinal or respiratory infection, especially in young adults and the elderly.

We recommend that you stay at the clinic for at least 15 minutes after vaccination because allergic reactions may occur. If an allergic reaction occurs, the symptoms will appear a few minutes after the vaccination. The person giving the vaccine will be able to treat this reaction immediately.

For any questions, contact the person giving the vaccine, or Info-Santé 811 or your doctor.