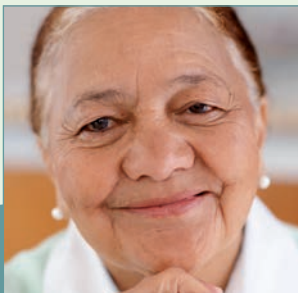
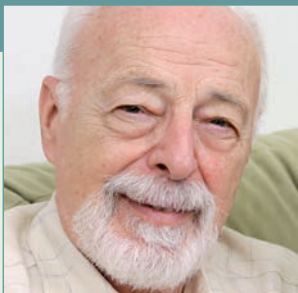


Aged 70 or 78?

*There's now
a vaccine to
help protect
you against
shingles*



Public Health
Agency

This leaflet describes shingles and the benefits of the vaccination.

The new shingles vaccine is being phased in over the next few years. This is the fifth year the vaccine has been offered in the UK. All people aged 70 on 1 September 2017 will be offered the vaccine, as well as those aged 78 on 1 September 2017. The vaccine will then be rolled out to other people in their seventies in future years.



Most of us had chickenpox when we were young children but many of us will not be aware that we've had it.

If we did have it, then the virus that caused it can stay in our bodies for the rest of our lives without our knowing it is there. Sometimes, however, the virus comes back to life when we're older and causes a disease called shingles. So shingles isn't like other infectious diseases because you don't catch it from someone else.

Shingles can be very painful and tends to affect people more commonly as they get older. And the older you are, the worse it can be. For some, the pain can last for many years.

There is now a vaccine that can reduce your risk of getting shingles or reduce the severity of its symptoms should you develop the disease.

What is shingles?

Shingles (also known as herpes zoster), is an infection of a nerve and the area of skin around it. For most, it can be a mild infection with good recovery. But it can cause a rash of very painful, fluid-filled blisters on the skin that can burst and turn into sores that eventually crust over and heal. These blisters usually affect an area on one side of the body, most commonly the chest but sometimes also the head, face and eye.

How long does it last and how serious can it be?

The rash usually appears a few days after the initial pain and lasts for about a week, but in serious cases the pain can last much longer. The older you are, the more likely you are to have long-lasting pain. Sometimes shingles develops in the eye and may also affect the eyelid. This can cause severe pain and lead to decreased vision or even permanent blindness in that eye. Most people recover fully, but for some, the pain goes on for several months or even years - this is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN). This is a particularly unpleasant condition with severe burning, throbbing or stabbing nerve pain. Current treatments



for PHN are not very effective but this vaccine reduces the risk of getting shingles and PHN. Even if you still get shingles after having the vaccine, the symptoms are much reduced.

Who will get the vaccine?

All people aged 70 on 1 September 2017 are eligible (ie all those born between 2 September 1946 and 1 September 1947, inclusive). If you're over 70 and under 80, you will be invited to have the vaccination on a 'catch-up' basis. People aged 78 on 1 September 2017 will be offered the vaccine from this autumn (ie all those born between 2 September 1938 and 1 September 1939, inclusive). If you were eligible in previous years but did not get the vaccine yet, you are still eligible until you turn 80.

What about people outside the 70-79 age group, will they be getting it?

People under 70 years of age will get the vaccination routinely on or after their seventieth birthday.

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

Do I need to do anything to get the vaccination?

No, your GP will invite you for the vaccination. You can have it at the same time as your flu jab in the autumn. If you miss it then, speak to your GP.

Are there people who shouldn't have the vaccination?

People who have weakened immune systems, for example due to cancer treatment, high dose steroids or people with conditions affecting bone marrow, lymphoma or leukaemias should not have the vaccine. Your doctor will advise whether this applies to you. Also, if you've had a severe reaction to any of the substances that go into the vaccine, you shouldn't have it. Again, your GP will advise you.

What causes shingles?

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox - varicella zoster. When you recover from chickenpox most of the virus is destroyed but some survives and lies inactive in the body in the nervous system. It can then reactivate later in life when your immune system is weakened by increasing age, stress or certain treatments (eg chemotherapy).



How do you catch shingles?

You don't catch shingles. Chickenpox virus caught earlier in your life reactivates later to produce shingles. You can't catch shingles from someone who has chickenpox. However, if you have shingles blisters, the virus in the fluid can infect someone who has not had chickenpox and they may develop chickenpox.

How common is shingles?

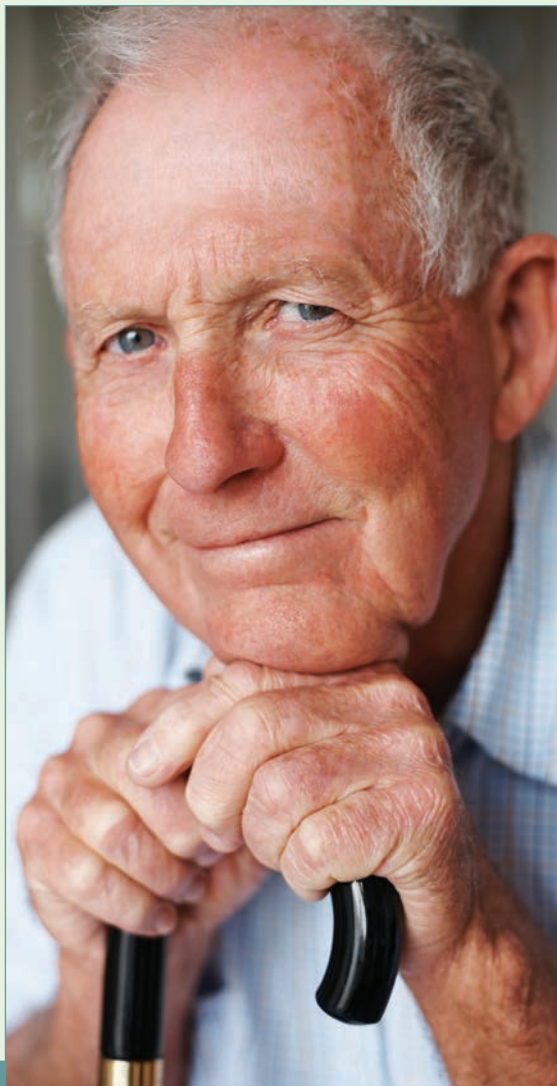
About one in five people who have had chickenpox develop shingles. Every year in Northern Ireland, around 1,000 people in their seventies will get shingles. Of these, about 200 go on to develop PHN.

How effective is the vaccination?

By having the vaccine you will reduce your chances of developing shingles by more than a third. And, if you do go on to have shingles the symptoms will be milder and the illness shorter, than if you had not had the vaccination.

Where is the vaccination given and will I need one every year?

Like most vaccinations, the vaccine will be given in your upper arm. You will only need to have the vaccination once - unlike the flu jab, you do not need to be re-vaccinated every year.

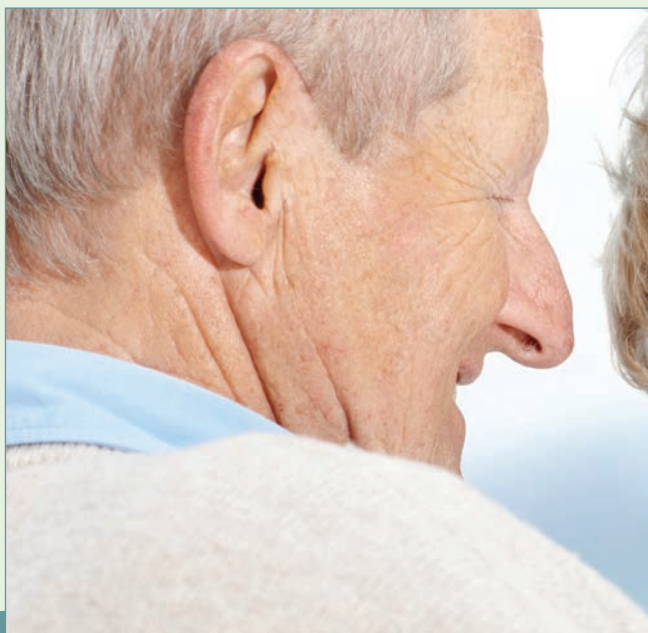


Will there be any side effects?

Side effects are usually quite mild and don't last very long. The most common side effects, which occur in at least one in ten people, are headache and redness, pain, swelling, itching, warmth and bruising at the site of the injection. If the side effects persist for more than a few days you should discuss this with your GP or practice nurse.

How safe is the vaccine - has it been used in other countries?

Like all licensed vaccines, the shingles vaccine has been thoroughly tested and meets UK and European safety and licensing requirements. It has been used extensively in several countries including the United States of America and Canada.



Should I take any precautions after having the vaccination?

Get advice from your GP if you get a rash after having the vaccination.

Further information

Speak to your GP or practice nurse, or go to www.publichealth.hscni.net for more information before or after you've had the vaccination.

All people aged 70 or 78 on
1 September 2017 are eligible to
get the vaccine





Public Health Agency

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