



## What you need to know about the **Shingles vaccine (herpes zoster)**

Shingles is caused by the chickenpox virus, which means anyone who has had chickenpox or received the chickenpox vaccine can get shingles. The virus causes a painful rash and can lead to long-term health complications. The best way to avoid shingles is by getting vaccinated. To learn more, read the questions and answers below. Talk to your primary care provider to make sure your family is up to date on shingles immunization and other recommended vaccines.

### **Who should get the shingles vaccine?**

The shingles vaccine is generally recommended for adults age 50+. Some people between ages 19-49 should also be vaccinated for shingles if they have certain health conditions or weakened immune systems. Even if you've had shingles in the past, you can still get vaccinated (if you are not currently having a flare-up). Shingles vaccines are given in two doses, 2-6 months apart. If you had the Zostavax vaccine in the past, the newer vaccine (Shingrix) is now recommended. Talk to your healthcare provider to determine what's best for you.

### **Is the shingles vaccine safe? How effective is it?**

The shingles vaccine has been proven to safely prevent shingles in adults under 70. It also prevents long-term nerve pain for those who do develop severe shingles. The benefits of vaccination far outweigh the health risks of shingles, and vaccination typically offers immunity for at least seven years.

### **Are there any side effects from getting the vaccine?**

Mild side effects like soreness and swelling at the injection site are normal and only last a few days. Some people might feel tired, have minor muscle pain, headache or fever. Over-the-counter medicine can help with these symptoms. Severe side effects from the shingles vaccine are very rare.

### **Is the vaccine approved for pregnant women? Who should avoid getting the vaccine?**

If you are pregnant, you should not get vaccinated for shingles until after your pregnancy and only when recommended by your doctor. You should also avoid the shingles vaccine if you currently have shingles or if you have certain allergies.

To learn more about the shingles vaccine or other routine immunizations for your family, talk to your primary care provider or visit [beimmunekansas.org](https://beimmunekansas.org).

