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NHS shingles vaccination

**This leaflet is intended for
those who are 50 years
and over with a severely
weakened immune
system (severely
immunocompromised)**

Learn more at
GSK's website:

[GetShinglesReady.co.uk](https://www.getshinglesready.co.uk)

If you get any side effects, report them to your nurse or doctor.

Get ready for your shingles vaccination

Vaccination to help protect against shingles is available for free to eligible individuals on the NHS. The programme is referred to as the Shingles National Immunisation Programme.

Eligibility for the free NHS shingles vaccination

How old are you?

Eligible	50 <small>Years or older</small> and over with a severely weakened immune system* (severely immuno-compromised) You're eligible now	Turning 65 You'll be eligible from your 65th birthday	70 to 79 You're eligible now
Not eligible	Under 50 with a severely weakened immune system*	Under 64, turned 65 before 1st Sept 2023 or currently 66 to 69	Over 80 without a severely weakened immune system

*Those aged 18–49 receiving a stem cell transplant may also be eligible. Speak to your specialist.

What does it mean to have a severely weakened immune system (severely immunocompromised)?

If you have a severely weakened immune system, also known as being severely immunocompromised, your immune system is not working properly.

There may be a number of reasons for this. It may be due to a medical condition, or the medication used to treat a medical condition.

The impact on your immune system function will vary.

Why is it important to get vaccinated against shingles if you have a severely weakened immune system?

Individuals who have a severely weakened immune system are at a higher risk of shingles and its complications compared to those who have not.

This is why shingles vaccination is recommended at an earlier age group for these patients.

Which patients with a severely weakened immune system are considered eligible for a free shingles vaccination?

Patients 50 years old or older with a severely weakened immune system (severely immunocompromised) are eligible for a free NHS shingles vaccination on the National Immunisation Programme.

Patients aged 18–49 receiving a stem cell transplant may also be eligible. Speak to your specialist.

The following patient groups are likely to be considered as having a severely weakened immune system:



Patients with some blood cancers e.g. specific types of leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma



Patients with HIV/AIDS with a CD4 count below 200cells/ μ l



Solid organ transplant recipients who are receiving (or recently received) immunosuppressant medication



Recipients of stem cell transplant in last 24 months (or more than 24 months ago if ongoing immunosuppression or Graft versus host disease)



Patients who are receiving (or recently received) immunosuppressive chemotherapy or radiotherapy for any type of cancer



Patients with chronic immune mediated inflammatory disease receiving (or who have received) immunosuppressive therapy *who are also receiving* moderate to high dose steroids, certain oral immune modulating drugs or specific combination therapies



Patients with some cellular or combined immune deficiencies



Patients with autoimmune diseases who are receiving (or recently received) targeted therapies or biologic immune modulators



Patients who have received high dose steroids for more than a week in the last month for any reason

This is not a comprehensive list. Please speak to your specialist, nurse, or GP surgery for more information about your individual eligibility.

What is shingles?¹

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is caused by the reactivation of the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox.

Following a chickenpox infection, which typically occurs in childhood, the varicella zoster virus remains dormant in the body for life, usually not causing any problems or symptoms. Our immune system naturally weakens over time as we age which may allow the usually inactive virus to reactivate, causing shingles.

Shingles can occur at any age but the risk, severity and complications increase with age. Individuals who have a severely weakened immune system are at a higher risk of shingles and its complications compared to those who have not.

Who is at risk?



The risk of shingles increases with ageing and for those with a weakened immune system²



9 in 10 adults in the UK are infected with the virus that causes shingles³



Anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk of developing shingles, with an estimated 1 in 4 lifetime risk of shingles⁴

What are the symptoms?¹

The first signs and symptoms of shingles can be a tingling or painful feeling in an area of skin, a headache or feeling generally unwell.

Typically, a blistering rash may appear a few days later, on one side of the body only.

The shingles rash most commonly appears on the chest or abdomen, but can appear anywhere on the body including the face.

It can take up to 4 weeks for the rash to heal. Usually, symptoms improve within weeks, however some patients suffer prolonged pain or other complications.

How can I get my shingles vaccination if I am 50 years old or over with a severely weakened immune system?

- Your GP surgery should have systems in place to identify you and will reach out to you to invite you for vaccination.
- However, if you are worried or think you are eligible and haven't been invited, speak to your nurse, GP surgery, or specialist who can advise you.

1. NHS. Shingles. 2023.
2. Johnson R et al. Ther Adv Vaccines. 2015; Vol. 3(4) 109–120.
3. DH Green Book Ch 34. Varicella. 2019.
4. DH Green Book Ch 28a. Shingles. 2024.

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